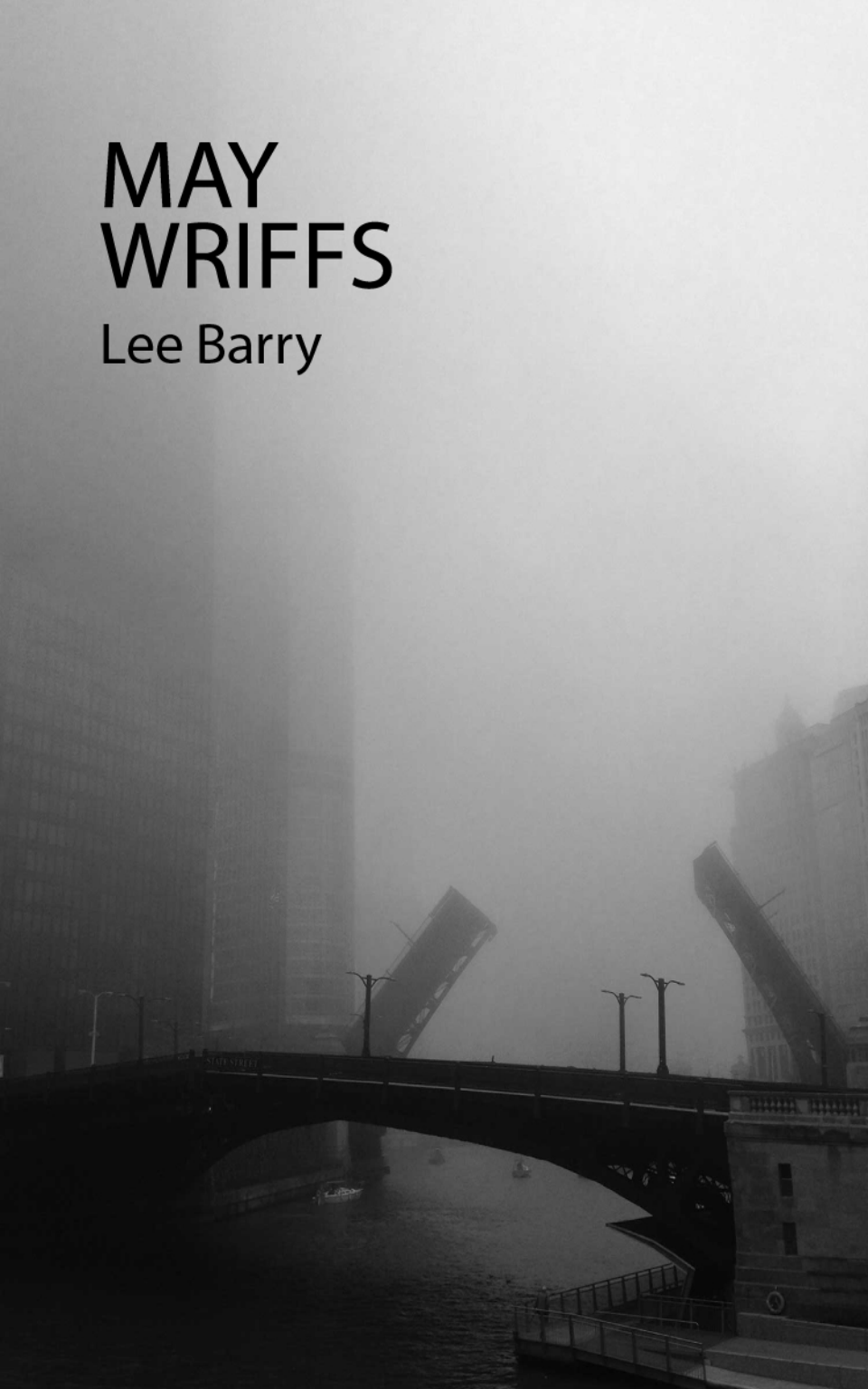
MAY WRIFFS

Lee Barry



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SOME MAY

Introduction

"Wriff" is a portmanteau of "written" and "riff".

I once riffed on whether riffing, or just speaking freely off the top of your head can suffice as writing.

From 2021-2024 I kept a private video diary on YouTube for the purpose of capturing ideas I was having, with the intention of one day transcribing them. These books are essentially that process. In the process, I had a chance to actually write them.

I could have continued with the riffs, but they generate too much text, and I realized that in most cases, simply writing them is a more elegant process. But in terms of them having a conversational quality, riffing does produce more readable work because you're hearing a thought process unimpeded by editing. Very often, if we're too concerned about how a sentence reads, we lose the flow of the whole piece. If you went through each sentence and made it perfect, it would be a clunky read. I think the wriff process provides a good balance of riffing and writing.

We use language when we're speaking it but it's different from writing it. Some people can dictate very well and it becomes a form of writing. But I'm of two minds about dictating and writing without speaking: I think dictating is a different form of writing that isn't writing per se. Writing is better if we do it with a silent mind. Speaking is a different kind of cognitive style—it shapes our brains in different ways if we can articulate verbally. The transcription of what I'm saying here would not be writing because I'm not in writing mode—I'm just riffing. But some people can dictate and riff, put in all the punctuation, and it can just go right out the door. I used to work with people who could do that

and I was impressed by it. Cognitive styles have to do with the things that we do rather than the things that we think or think about doing.

May 1sts

5/1/2021

Rick Beato did a video a couple of days ago with the thought experiment as to what kind of music he would still be listening to when he was 80, including Metal. I think people will just continue on with the things that they like. You don't stop eating food you like just because you don't think it's appropriate. Since most people listen to music under headphones they privately listen to whatever they want. The interesting thing is that listening has become very social—not because we listen together as we do in a room, we "follow" each other along the tethers (or cordons) of algorithms. People tend to be very PC about the things that they're listening to on public playlists as a kind of signaling. But privately they're probably listening to other things that would seem "embarrassing" and wouldn't share that publicly. Personally, I listen to everything I've ever listened to but I'm not sharing it online. (Why?)

One of the regrettable things is the fact that people lose interest in music once they have spouses and kids, and especially if the spouse and kids don't take an interest. This leaves the musician bored and not always interested in what everyone else is doing. There's an attrition generally: once you reach the age of about 30 you're tuning out of popular culture. There are some circumstances where people are under pressure to conform to the tenets of the marriage and so they distance themselves from the music, perhaps because the nostalgia is painful and they know they can't indulge in something so "selfish". But with most people, I think they're still open to listening to things from their childhood and adolescence, as I still do to this day when I find myself

making records as if they were recorded in a 70s-era studio, sometimes devoid of synths, and are just organs and electric pianos. I'm not pushing that away at all. It's baked in the cake for me, as is my prog, jazz, and classical influences. #riff

5/1/2022

What is the sound of a place in an abstract sense? Motown had a sound. Philadelphia had a sound. Memphis had a sound. Glen Campbell "soundtracked" places like Phoenix, Wichita, and Galveston. Chicago doesn't really have a sound all its own but it has "scored" my life.

[5/1/2024: I suppose you could use the "Chicago" song by Fred Fisher. But do we want that as its "sound"? There's "Sweet Home Chicago" as a blues shuffle, but do we want that? I hear Chicago as having a "steel" quality.]

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I'm almost finished with the book *The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is*. There's an interesting chapter on looms and how weaving is a metaphor for how the internet works. The author made a good case for that and in the final chapter he's talking about virtual worlds and how we can use different metaphors for understanding the internet. He says it's a kind of telescope: we're looking through the telescope to see things that we might not normally see with normal vision, and the telescope allows us to do that. It's a prosthetic device like eyeglasses.

The thing that crossed my mind was the possibility of virtual musical instruments, and using them in different ways like walking around inside them, walking on them, and so on. But how interesting is that for more than a couple seconds? Also we've been able to do that in VR for 20 years now and

it hasn't caught on. People are sold on the idea that we're moving towards the Metaverse and our whole existence is going to be its habitation. Ultimately, it's a narrow experience: you'd have to take the goggles off sometimes. They'd be more like headphones, but people have those in all the time as well. I liked to wear them with a bit of leakage of ambient sound, formative for ambient music. It could work the same with VR or AR where one world is overlaid against another, like screen mode in Photoshop. #riff

5/1/2023

Many of my songs start with words or phrases that have a natural musicality to them, which can become the underlying framework for the music, but very often they end up as instrumentals. If music did in fact precede language in the development of intelligence, then rhythmicity drives it. Obviously, not all language is rhythmic, but when it is, music is more possible. As to tribal African culture, music is only used for tribal rites and storytelling and is not used as it is in the West. But any time we have to describe music (without notation) it has to be with some kind of vocalization, even with nonsense words. Sometimes the nonsense words start to have meaning.

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Our local communities are our "worlds". I live in the world of Oak Park, some live in the world of the "north side" or the "south side" or whatever suburb one might live in. (5/1/2021: What is the sound of a place in an abstract sense—like Phoenix—what does it sound like to a songwriter?) Chicago doesn't really have a sound all its own but it has "scored" my life.)

5/1/2024

It's remarkable how much the #hashtag has influenced culture and history, even though they are still mostly non-functional and have yet to become standardized across the web. They are essentially semiotic in nature and are difficult to suss out as to what all the gray levels are. It's like what periods(.) used to signal in texts, or perhaps still do. Hashtags are about theories of minds. To me it's a sharp sign. If they were to be standardized, I would use flats, double-flats, naturals, and double-sharps to designate "states" of the hashtag.

I now am beginning to realize that all the new daily entries can become additional "data" for all the songdays into the future, by me, or others in the future.

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Years ago I riffed about how I was seeing changes on the Arts & Letters Daily site—something I've followed since the late 90s, and now it's all doomer content. Now I'm having a similar experience at my favorite local bookstore, The Book Table. The non-fiction table is full of the same kinds of material—at least 3 new books on anxiety. Publishers know it's a hot topic and are riding the wave. I'm sick of it all, especially the "woundology" books.

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As I was looking at the Pete Souza photo of the White House Situation Room on the day Bin Laden was killed (5/1/2011), I realize, again, that you can't kill an ideology, especially one that involves The Oppressed. The West has now mind-melded with the terrorist world. There was also a Thomas Hoepker photo taken on 9/11 that I stumbled on showing a group of people hanging out seeming-

ly leisurely on the Hudson with the smoking towers in the background still standing. It was seen as insensitive or wasn't truthful enough as the people in the photo looked too relaxed. Somehow we expect photographers to capture emotion when emotion isn't always apparent. They were saying, "Hey, we weren't just sitting around..." The two photos are kind of bookends.

5/1/2025

Kamala Harris makes first speech since leaving office. Why was it that people didn't listen to her during the campaign? Because if you stage a coup, you already know how people can be easily conned with cunning propaganda. It might take 30 years, but you could destroy democracy and burn it all down. Newt and Mitch finally pwnd the Democrats (for now).

I particularly like this segment, and was kind of musical: "We are living in a moment when the checks and balances upon which we have historically relied have begun to buckle. And we here know that when the checks and balances ultimately collapse. If Congress fails to do its part or if the courts fail to do their part, or if both do their part but the president defies them, well friends that is called a constitutional crisis. And that is a crisis that will eventually impact everyone because it could mean that the rules that protect our fundamental rights and freedoms that ensure each of us has a say about how our government works will no longer matter. And if that happens the one check, the one balance, the one power that must not fail, is the voice of the people."

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If you want to study human nature all you have to do is study the history of Pink Floyd or the Beatles I just watched

a video about the brouhaha after someone posted a birthday greeting to Polly Sampson and David Gilmour's wife and lyricist, claiming that she was like a Yoko Ono who broke up Pink Floyd. You just can't get away from human nature no matter how you hard you try. If you think you're going to avoid it, you have another thing coming.

What I noticed a long time ago is that fans really protect their heroes. No matter how bad the reputation is of Roger Waters, he still has a good reputation for being the engine for Pink Floyd, and there is no doubt about that at all. I think some people are just better at language than others, and it probably starts when you're about the age of 8.

May 2nds

5/2/2021

Occasionally I go through my old music manuscripts—a huge banker's box full of stuff written in a ten year period from the late 80s. The last perusal involved organizing all the song lead sheets, resulting in a stack of approximately 100-200 pages.

I was thinking at the time how much space a decade's worth of paintings would require? For an artist who makes big canvases, it is an exponentially larger requirement for the storage of unsold paintings.

What I like about music is that it doesn't take up a lot of space and can be stored in boxes or binders. It scales well.

[5/2/2025: Frank Zappa had a huge score library, as do other composers, not to mention music libraries at universities and orchestra halls worldwide. That's just as unwieldy. Some of it is digitized--I would imagine a small percentage. We think digital information scales well. An interesting statistic: We create 20 quintillion bits every day. What we eventually curate and use is tiny, even over the course of a year. It's the exformation that we want.]

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It now seems that having original ideas or even the desire to create something from an original idea is quaint and sentimental.

There is a more compelling allure in artificial intelligence in that we're going to have a machine make our content for us, so there's no need for us to be intimately involved—or might be seen as too sentimental. We want things to be

hands-off because we have gotten used to the precautions: It seems safer to "glove and mask" in many things we do. Having ideas is just this old thing that previous generations did: We don't necessarily have to be involved in idea creation and it is something that we want to avoid at all costs because popular culture is now about avoidance.

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To be "sincere" in my view—in terms of making art or music—is to simply just do the work. If you're just doing the work and you look at what the results are—that's what you made. Whether there's any meaning in that or not I suppose it has to be determined.

The intellectualization of artistic work tends to result in things that are mostly insincere. If you're being truly sincere to yourself you're just working and making whatever you want to make. It's good to have certain periods that you go through in order to keep that in check. If we keep making the same things all the time, whether it be stuff that's conservative or radical, we're generally being very insincere to our own desires. The changing of period is a way to regulate that. This goes back to the idea of being PC, even to your own values. The idea of being cool in culture is being PC to other people's values or PC to cultural values. It's like the carefully curated playlist that we share with people when it might be truly false to the things that we actually play.

The popular notion in the art (or music) world is that you should not want to repeat what you've done in the past. That's me in the late 90s when I did a 180 into ambient and non-song music ("Miles From Mars") because culture was telling me it was over. In retrospect it was over for teenagers in 1995, or now the oldest millennials.

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I recently watched a film, *You Go To My Head* about a woman who was involved in a rollover accident in the Moroccan desert, was concussed and got long-term amnesia. She was picked up by an architect who was working in Morocco building houses for people. He had also built a house for himself–a very minimal house–very Corbusian–just a white stucco structure, which I really liked. I had never seen a film that was shot in Morocco–totally gorgeous.

What was particularly interesting as a corollary was that a person who had been concussed and has memory loss is sort of like an artificial intelligence or a robot, where they have to relearn the world. There was a scene where she's walking around the area and verbally labeling things: "house", "car", "palm tree", and so on, so as to reconstruct her memory and to create a mnemonic for re-learning her way around. There's another scene where she's having a dialogue with who she thinks is her husband because he's implanted that idea in her and she's just going along with it, sort of like a pet, and she says something like, "I don't know who I am, but I'm confiding in you to tell me who I am because you're my husband." So he constructs this really nice profile of her–she's artistic, she's a good dancer, she's very beautiful, and she's buying it. But then she asks, "What's the dark side?" The takeaway was that's how an AI would have to be built–by asking those kinds of questions, and you can construct an AI however you want–that you're their spouse. I think that's coming in the future.

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It's fun to pull out an old lead sheet and play through it on guitar or piano. There are so many ways to re-purpose it. The ironic thing about Remix is that's all it was about, so the

re-purposing has already been re-done and you're just doing the same old thing, whereas re-arrangement is something new from old material—without resorting to Remix. But should I just stop and say, "This is old stuff I have to move on to something that's culturally important?" I keep doing that by using ambient techniques in traditional pop songs. The artist that I always cite is Gerhard Richter. He's a fine painter and can do representational painting. But his abstract and conceptual work is great as well. That's the model that I always use. The fact that an artist is just enjoying what they're doing is truly authentic.

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There's been a shifting baseline which I've noticed since the 90s. There are entries in this diary where I started seeing more and more stupid and wacky content and behavior on the internet, and continues to this day. People are unwittingly capitulating to it. The idea of the "tech shabbat" is a good idea but skipping a day of drinking does not solve your problem as an alcoholic.

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I'm reluctantly realizing that as a creative person you always have to be on social media. I attended a Zoom meeting yesterday that was essentially about "working the floor". I don't like how it changes my intentions and makes creativity a transaction (I'll like yours if you like mine).

I wonder how people find the time to be doing this kind of thing. It has to affect the work. That's perhaps why people may be thinking why spend a lot of time on the art itself if you're going to be spending most of your time marketing? What you want is the wu wei approach.

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Brassai 1934 started as a lead sheet as jazz player would make a lead sheet with chord changes and melody, which gives me a chance to consider the outline of the piece and how it's going to unfold, and is essentially a blueprint.

It's difficult to decide on the iconic Brassai photo. I've been through a number of photo books which informed my decision to some degree. It's not that their choice would be my choice necessarily. I see his entire body of work as iconic, especially those done in the early 1930s in Paris.

The particular photo that I'm using was taken at a particular place in Paris, so that is the Place that is being scored. I'm trying to incorporate his Hungarian ethnicity into it as well.

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Grazing through Pierre Boulez's *Music Lessons*. He was referencing the historic "costumization" of music in certain contexts–-that you perhaps have a poor understanding of, or it's just been characterized like the typical baroque music setting where you have performances of the music with musicians in wigs and with candles on the set-–just a silly cliche stage production, when you really don't know what it was like then, but there are myriad ways that you can recontextualize the music. Boulez is a good conductor in that sense he's more like someone who works on a movie set or is involved in a movie production, like a production designer. It's another hat that you put on. Sometimes you're the director, sometimes you're the cinematographer–there are different angles that you can take. I certainly do. When I'm writing and producing music I sometimes use cinematic metaphors. It's a really useful head space to go int. For example, you're going to do an R&B record and the studio

is in the south somewhere, and you look at photos of those studios and think of what it was like in them. I think that's what he's talking about here.

5/2/2023

Gordon Lightfoot died at 84. *Edmund Fitzgerald* is particularly resonant for me having lived on the Great Lakes. (It's a "placey" cinematic song", like "Wichita Lineman". It's the sound of Lake Superior). It's a "Ship of Theseus" song as well: On July 4, 1995, divers recovered the ship's bell from the bottom of the lake, replacing it with a replica engraved with the names of the crew. It gathers history as time goes on. It's sort of like a suitcase that travels around the world. People put things in it and they take things from it and then it gets sent off to another place and the same thing happens. After a while, you don't understand what went in and out of the suitcase. The suitcase itself has a history. So if you put that suitcase in a museum in 300 years it would potentially have all that history in it.

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Riff: Idea of the shared or common enemy. That should be a conciliatory atmosphere, but will go nowhere. And even if there were accords, conflicts would arise, and new alliances and enmity. Humans weren't designed for endless amity. "Edmund Fitzgerald" is a "Ship of Theseus" song in the sense that a replica was made of the bell, and is also a synecdoche, where the part stands for the whole. The song itself also stands for the whole

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Interesting: The Ethiopian "Honky Tonk Nun" [1] now in her 90s. She had to give up music but eventually came back to

1. https://davidbyrne.com/radio/david-byrne-presents-ethiopi-

it wanting to complete her life's work. The takeaway: Once you've been there you'll always want to return. People who haven't been doing something their entire lives don't understand this. I'm that honky tonk nun.

5/2/2024

What's remarkable about today's world is that there is so much interest in spiritual exaltation, the sacred, and interest in right-hemisphere thinking, yet we're dragged down by technofascism, and we seem not to know how to tell them apart. We're living is Sagan's demon-haunted world. Younger people probably have no idea who he is, but he spoke for it. There will be more Sagans in the future, when it might be too late.

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Interesting article: *The Revenge of the Home Page.* "One welcome lesson of the post-platform internet is that sticking to what you're good at might be a better strategy in the long run than trying to make content that's popular."

The internet always was and still is a poor place to do research of any depth. But in retrospect, so was the print world. No one on the planet had access to everything and anything. LLMs are the same story. They're not that large.

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Interesting interview with Burton Cummings who wrote the lyrics to *American Woman* and how Americans twisted its meaning. Especially now, doing the songdays, everything arises from the musical nature of language, not necessarily its meaning. Meaning is a secondary by-product. (Ambigui-

ty is the most interesting thing in art). People want to "read into" things.

5/2/2025

Back in May 1997 Carol Marin resigned from the local NBC station in protest of the hiring of Jerry Springer. She is very brave to stand up in defense of journalism. Many were behind her in her protest. Jerry Springer was when I first realized trash TV was having a deleterious effect on society. It had nothing to do with the internet, which was very limited, accessed only through a phone line. It's easy to blame the internet and social media, but TV is still the evil culprit.

TV isn't any longer because nothing is broadcasted or "pushed" to the masses. People are "pulling" what they want (or can find). We're still in the 1997 world in the sense we're still in the culture wars. We can go back to McLuhan: The dangers of a medium that's too cool is that it's free admission and there's no order to anything. If we went back to only 3 major networks (which is what we have now on social media) the possibility for fascism would increase. Only one network would be like living in North Korea. As Minsky said, "By adapting uniform styles, we protect ourselves from distractions". Ergo, AI is the tool to achieve those ends because it will allow people to find comfy silos to assuage distraction and to be with tribes in those silos.

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The internet allows us to see the past being destroyed. By this I mean, we have a new way of looking at everything from a generational standpoint, not just one generation, but everyone living now. This is a contrast to the pre-internet world where you were only able to see the past by looking at print materials and whatever programs were produced

for TV. Now everything is available by searching for it. So the younger generations can get a broader view of what the world used to be like in the 60s through the 80s. They must see that the world is in extreme decline. It's not that it wasn't before; it just allows us to see the decline. Also, digital natives now control new media, whereas before it was the "TV natives" who controlled new media, but was more finely moderated. Now moderation is an attack on free speech of any kind, all of which is searchable and ground up by artificial intelligence and LLMs. Typically we don't start seeing declines until about the age of 50. The first Millennials, who will turn 50 in 2030, will be noticing declines. The big declines I have seen are in what people find interesting. If you want to stay interested in things you have been interested in historically, you have to "cloister" yourself. Cloistering is a way to find sanctuary from too much change just for the sake of itself. This is why I like the idea of exformation: what takeaways can I find, then go on with things...

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Went through boxes of photos taken in the 80s. So exhausting, even for a photographer. Found two gems, one of an open field (plat) in Texas, where my father's house was going to be built. It's one of those photos that are otherwise remarkable but has a power--perhaps just to me. There's also the "world" of the photographs. You revisit what it was like when the idea that the US would become a dictatorship 40 years in the future would seem like a joke. My parents would have been mortified--and mortified that their relatives would vote for a potential Hitler, having been in World War II. Perhaps a good way to come back to reality for Trumpers is to look at boxes of old snapshots and get into that world where Trump would have been inconceivable as a potential president.

May 3rds

5/3/2021

To me, using AI in music is essentially a very conceptual thing, and is an extension of conceptual art—not mainstream. Music itself is a conceptual art even if you're not doing conceptual work.

I just read an article about the Endel and Plastikman collaboration. Basically what they're doing are remixes but they're running them through neural networks and using Alexa Skills, which is interesting. But I don't see it as that innovative. It's people trying to be innovative and they're covering the same ground of people who are now their grandparents or great-grandparents. If you consider the threads of classical music, we're sort of still doing that as well. It's a way to be conceptual-cool as a musician. I did it too at age 35.

The problem I have with AI music is that it doesn't really give you anything to do over longer periods. Once the Beatles were using the studio as an instrument their time in the studio increased. If all they ever did in the studio was let machines generate everything they'd never have gone into a studio.

What I like about new tools is that they (might) give you new ideas. It runs in the background or on the periphery—like watching TV in the background while you're doing something else, and things emerge out of that peripheral attention.

The question becomes what do we do with the content that is generated by AI if it is provisional and raw. It's anathe-

ma to what music is—even phenomenologically. I think the future always should have been psychoacoustics. It's being pursued to some degree now with Steven Wilson doing new 5.1 mixes of classic rock albums. Perhaps new headphone technology will put a similar atmosphere around and within the head, such that music emanates in a continuous 360 and you don't know exactly where sounds are coming from. Again, it's dependent on hardware, and people won't want to make that investment in the gadgetry—as they didn't with quadraphonic. Any new forced innovations in the future (including the Metaverse) will go the way of quadrophonic, unless "quadraphonic" becomes miniaturized, portable and cheap. Add fashionable and it's a hit.

It's still AI winter as far as I'm concerned. I think composers, if they're true composers, just need to get back to work and work with traditional instruments, which are the best tools when you're at the formative stages of a musical idea.
In terms of the visuals created with neural nets, it reminds me of the color organs from a hundred years ago, which were very cool indeed.

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When you're physically playing music you can't be thinking about things you normally would be thinking about. The default mode network gets deactivated temporarily.

When I pick up my instruments and noodle around after I've been reading something heavy or philosophical I realize they are two different worlds. Music has a particular quiddity when you're playing it as opposed to passive listening. You get a tactility that you wouldn't get otherwise. (I feel it most on the Jazz Bass).

I like the feeling of being 180 degrees away from the intellectualization of music. Playing well, at least for the time that you are playing instruments, turns off the left hemisphere (McGilchrist). The left hemisphere is the domain of the Apollonian, what we know as the archetypal composer composing at the piano, not to play it but using it as a kind of "typewriter".

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I think the major developments with AI in music is really more at the database level–the standardization of metadata such that information can be verifiably cataloged so as to be able to monetize works. It's been a patchwork for so long and now at least we have the MLC, the music licensing collective, which was part of legislation that got passed about two years ago. I would encourage all artists to be a part of the MLC if you are collecting performance royalties. They are somewhat connected with the other databases such as ASCAP, but there's two different sets of metadata. It's going to take a long time to standardize. It's still all a tedious manual process but administrative work has always been a part of music administration. There's also music schemas on the semantic web. It was a great idea but unfortunately never got adopted by the internet.

5/3/2022

Frontiers released to streaming services. Starting to get some ideas for videos, one of them for Weegee. Weegee was the famous crime scene photographer with the cigar and the whole film noir/police procedural vibe.

5/3/2023

Music is sort-of mathematical but only on more simple levels. In my experience, music will make a person more curious and have broader interests, but that's a generalization as well. It depends on which brain hemisphere predominates: People skilled at math probably have a bias for left-brain thinking and won't be (naturally) good at music. I would assert that music has more to do with language rather than math.

5/3/2024

When I take breaks from using the internet I can see how it's evolved over a generation. The net was always intellectual and heady because it's a projection of the collective psyche. I see younger generations still doing the heady thing, but it's become "strangerized", evidenced by questions like "How is music intersectional, specifically with the music of the Beatles...?" "Who the fuck cares?" is my first thought. I don't even think the person (if it is a person) cares either. It's primarily a plea for attention and connection. I know this is important, but what can we do about it? That's the more important question for the internet going forward. I think we should bring back the old metaphor of the net being like a library, a terminal you walk up to fund something, then you go back to doing other things. Imagine always wanting to go to the library to use the terminal but over time you don't know why you're doing it. You go to ask the Oracle questions but you don't know why. The answer is probably having to do with it being a Skinner box, but we know that already. Things can lose their purpose and function when you haven't asked why.

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Interesting video by Robert Spira ("Exploring The Impulse To Create Beauty") about the desire to create beauty by finding the essence of it. But he found that it was elusive. Aesthetic beauty is easy to create ("getting away with beauty"), but the je ne sais quoi and/or the sine qua non are more difficult. You'll never try hard enough to achieve that. It has to be wu wei. After, I watched a John Eddington interview with Roy Harper. He was talking about him doing the vocal on *Have A Cigar* because Roger Waters couldn't get in that range, and generally that it was a difficult record for them to make. Counter to Spira, sometimes essences come through and you don't see the struggle behind it. Pink Floyd albums were magic to me in the late 70s and inspired me to want to write music, but the band's struggles weren't apparent at that point. But artifice is all like that: it's designed to trigger repeatable feelings, and for artists, to attempt to create beautiful experiences themselves.

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Robert DeNiro on CNN–He's always been a character actor–playing himself essentially. But he can separate real life from "reel" life, unlike Trump. He's trapped in the TV–like Bowie's *TVC15*, about his girlfriend who was stuck in the TV. Trump seems like he's been in it since the 80s. He simply wanted to be a celebrity more than anything. It's sort of ironic because we all lived in that head space in the 80s. Oprah was okay with Trump–everybody was okay with Trump because we normalized it, but it went off the rails and became toxic. Even then I saw his dark side. What's interesting about De Niro is that here's somebody who has been in some kind of role for most of his life and has more of a grasp of reality than most people. It was Reality TV in the 90s, among other things, that were the inflection points, and the Culture Wars generally–right when Clinton was campaigning, and certainly by the time he got into office.

By the midterm elections in 1994 the witch hunts were on with Newt Gingrich and that whole neocon cabal.

5/3/2025

Once you've done lots of writing you can lose your ability to dance. Words and music are its cure. Since music composition is more like writing words, the composer gets stuck in the frontal lobe. (Daniel Dennett doesn't think enjoyment of one's own profession is dulled by doing it.) There is a primal connection between the two, as evidenced by aphasia patients still able to recall music. Very often I'll get song ideas from repeating 1-4 bar phrases in dreams. They are earworms essentially and are further evidence of the connection between language and music. There is now more evidence, at least anecdotally, that music came before language in the form of onomatopoeia or mimicking of animal sounds going back 30,000 years. The first flutes were made from bird bones, which they probably used to mimic bird songs as a way of communicating with them. Whistled language is another example.

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Marianne Williamson: "This is not a drill". We know this. "Read history--get prepared intellectually". Will that do anything at this point? Reading (non-fiction) is typically a habit one starts in their 20s--mostly for people who went to college. I was fortunate because I had lots of time to read on trains. Public transportation can make you smarter.

May 4ths

5/4/2021

People seem to be annoyed by people who do more than one thing. They like to package you and you feel defiant. Some people won't see me as a musician or artist, or they can't entertain the idea that somebody can't do just one thing. It's noise for them. They can't fathom the idea that somebody can do music and art, and that it's incumbent on us to make a decision and stick with that one thing. I don't think I've ever done that.

I read an article recently about Ron Wood's exhibition of his paintings. He's had some health issues as well. I think the work is fine and the critics need to go easy on him. Again, people can't fathom that a musician can do art as well as music. As I recall lots of music fans in the 70s made art about their favorite artists—mine a pastel of Jeff Beck, circa 1976 of the pose on Blow By Blow. (Somebody's got a leaf blower...I wonder what pitch that is).

I'm reminded of that art gallery in the loop (on Randolph across from the CCC) that exhibited art that was made by art students and various other "amateur" artists. Some of it was really interesting because it was de-skilled—where the errors in the artwork made it interesting—a little smear here and there or the characters weren't painted correctly—it just had a certain charm to it. Ultimately, the value of art comes from its endearment.

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Not understanding abstract or contemporary art is a good corollary for lots of things. Everybody gets to the point where they don't get something–like liberals don't get conservatives, conservatives don't get liberals. It works the same way for the appreciation of art. It's probably based on the same wiring in the brain. People might go through their entire lives not getting anything, or not wanting to. The thing is that they can see it in themselves that they could get it but they won't because it's a way to be passive aggressive or oppositional. It's saying, "I know I could probably get it but I won't get it because it'll give you too much satisfaction, and I'm not ceding any ground–-I'm standing firm with my beliefs. Secretly I might like your painting, I get what you're trying to do, but I'm not going to tell you I'm getting it."

5/4/2022

I don't think you should tamper too much with original album releases, as you're not supposed to tamper too much with damaged Old Master paintings. Personally, I like things that are rough around the edges. Even early demos have a je ne sais quoi about them. If you do a remix, have band members present—if they care.

Ideally, what you want is to at least re-master to normalize it against everything else in the music ecosystem. 70s albums tend to be a much lower volume. Also, knowing the history of the recording helps put it into perspective.

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YouTube is in many ways a Nostalgia Machine, and is one of the things that inspired the title of my new album, *Nostalgia Galaxy*. I was just watching a Genesis concert from July of 1980, fronted by Phil Collins. I remember that time so it's like looking back in time. If young people just saw this,

they're essentially seeing the "light" from 40 years ago and might be very impressed by it. That's how nostalgia works–it's on its way and it might take light years for it to reach you. And once it reaches you then you can fully appreciate it. Watching these kinds of things on YouTube is probably much more advisable than the usual political rants.

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We can "read into" the things we see, such as art, where ideas might not have been there at all in the beginning when the artist was creating the work or writing the book. We're always reading something into history. Once 100 or 200 years pass, and nobody's around to give their opinion or their knowledge of it, we have to remake or "read into" knowledge. If there's no information available about a painting or a book we can read all kinds of things into it. That's where history becomes more malleable–it becomes a work in progress. The text is always wet on the internet, but once codified into books, there's less that can be "read into" something and they become clarified facts. But even then people will twist them, but will people go through the trouble of sorting that out? No, they just want to read whatever they want to read into history.

5/4/2023

Reading Jenny Odell's *Saving Time*. Interesting: "familects", temporal commons, e.g. the 9-5 feeling we have to be working at those times. Someone walking around at 10 in the morning would be a breach of the temporal commons. (Routines as human universals, bell-ringing); I always go into my studio, even though it is not a physical space; rebels against time standards such as the Uyghurs—they just have to be different.

Perhaps there's a connection between a teenager's developing brain and new media arriving on the scene such as the internet circa 1995. Teenagers at that time were the oldest millennials, born in 1980, and affected culture at-large once they were exposed to it. Teens from popular culture are experimenting not only with their individuality but with culture itself, just as it happened in the 60s, although in the 1960s there wasn't a brand new media like the internet. Radio was already in the culture for over a generation. TV was somewhat new, but not brand new, and it wasn't as widespread as the internet was in 1999, when more shocking things were happening, such as Columbine, Napster, Clinton's sordid affair with Monica Lewinsky, and so on. When a generation reaches their teen years at the same time that a new media emerges it becomes an inflection point. So in the future, we'll have to watch how new roll-outs of technology intersect with adolescence because it will be the beginning of an era that changes how the world works. But it's probably silly to think that teens can be prevented from exploring the possibilities for their future, even for the sake of saving ourselves from the dystopia it might create. #riff

5/4/2024

The Songday routine continues. I thought it was just going to be for one month, but they are too much fun. The abstraction from today is derived from a 5/4/2021 riff where I had referenced an art gallery in the Chicago Loop that exhibits and sells the work of art students. I had always liked going there to check out the new art. Sometimes there would be interesting pieces that had a charm about them. The phrase that generated the rhythm was "Gallery in the Loop" which has 16th notes in it and I immediately thought of the "Papa Was A Rolling Stone" groove with the stop-and-go bass. In a peripheral way, it is also *Music For Places*, an art gallery in the Chicago Loop.

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As more artists decamp to AI and digital art, what happens to the idea of "de-skilling" and happy accidents being made because of a lack of skill? Doing the "At The CCC" song brought this to mind. Certainly digital accidents happen (glitch, datamoshing), but they're not accidents we make. They are accidents we claim as a "decisive moment". Also, I had the idea of beginning to explore the possibilities in NFT shorts of them. (Life is essentially a series of Shorts, which are 60-90 second mental impressions of the world. We all have the attention span of a grasshopper or gold fish. In fact, dreams are a testament of this. This how dreams are made of short scenes or fragments, and that we hear music in them, that tend to be short 1-4 bar loops).

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I know it's terribly cynical, but it's human nature to shoot down other people who rise above their perceived station as a way to mollify negative emotions such as envy or feeling of being annoyed in some way, but the "shooting down" is done with a silent invisible gun called passive aggression. Feeling ignored? It's the silent shots of passive aggression. Two books come to mind on this: *The Status Game* and recently, Robert Sapolsky's *Behave*.

What's odd about the protests are secular ideas (protesting for democracy) to support religious beliefs. This is why the only solution is secularism supporting freedom of religion, not one religion demanding conversion to a belief.

5/4/2025

This morning I was thinking about art and activism again. I still don't think that I'm the activist archetype. What concerns me is what happens to art when it becomes activist. The quality of it drops because your own standards of quality will have to change in order to fit the new objectives. I don't know if I'm up for that yet. I know it's important for artists to be activists, and feel that they have more obligations, but I don't think all artists are talented enough to be activist artists and still be interesting artists. What you want is a movement, like Dada of Surrealism. This way, artists can do things that are political as well as whatever their particular art practice is. You don't want to sacrifice your personal and artistic integrity while you're fulfilling your moral obligations. For me, there's always the idea of simply "getting back to normal", even amid the din of new normals. Then we have to think about our prescribed roles. How do we manage our activism with our friends and family? I would think that most families wouldn't even accept the idea that one family member is suddenly going to go off on a soapbox. People will always be conforming in some way in order to navigate through their lives. Emmy van Deurzen was talking about this a few days ago where it's a balancing act of conforming and being an individual.

The danger in wanting things to be normal again is that we start to compromise in order to find the comforts of the old normal. Compromising can be insidious: one day we see ourselves as different people, or our previous relationships have changed. The fact that they have changed may mean that you have changed, even though you think you haven't. The thing about normals is that they always feel normal when they might not be.

What I like about putting my own thoughts through the artificial intelligence machine is that it reminds me of things I said before that I have forgotten.

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Using sound in film as a metaphor, our lives are always "diegetic"--we live in the world of the world, we live in the now (mostly). We won't know what the future will be like, so it's silly to change our behavior based on ideas of what society will be like. For example, what should I do or not do today that I will be criticized for in 2050? Imagine you ask yourself that question for decades. Eventually, you'd regret all the things you got wrong and wasted your time and life. In the 80s, in my 20s, I wasn't thinking I shouldn't be playing and writing jazz, or reading the books I was reading. That would be living a "non-diegetic" life, never living in the world of the World. You also might be seeming to prevent judgment of your behavior by younger generations. We all live worlds of normals--or we simply aren't aware of what's happening in the shadows of power. Boomers accepted neoliberalism as the norm and there's no need to feel regret for it. It wasn't your fault--you were just going along what seemed to be righteous, but neoliberalism created the world we are now in. Your only duty in today's world is to see what the lesson is so younger generations don't repeat it. Younger generations, instead of blaming boomers, is to see if you're going through some motion unwittingly that will affect the lives of others in the future.

May 5ths

5/5/2023

Just listened to an interview with Marianne Williamson by a spiritualist and she made the point that I have been talking about lately: the "code-switching" between being a spiritualist and a presidential candidate. We live in a different time now when this seems more acceptable. But for older people who understand the higher-consciousness movement as being separate from political activism, it's more of a stretch. In contrast, I was watching the Democracy Now! channel and they were talking about the recent conviction of some of the Proud Boys. The attorney for one of them said her client had no criminal record before and was "just serving his country". That's the other side of the same coin, i.e. "I defend my spiritual values", "I defend my country", "I'm doing it benignly", "I'm not causing any trouble". There's no comparison with Marianne Williamson, but I think in general in society now you see these kinds of ironic juxtapositions between being a political activist and a spiritualist. Everybody's trying to play both sides of the fence or playing both sides of many different fences. As I've said before, we're in a Hall of Mirrors and sometimes we confuse ourselves by the positions that we take. At the moment I don't know if it's true that we're going into a new spiritual age and everything's going to be fine or if we're going into a new dark age akin to the time after the collapse of the Bronze Age, where we'll enter a period of endless civil wars perhaps going on for centuries. The human mind is capable of all good and evil things, so how is it that we make a collective choice? I don't think we can make collective choices if they are already made in the Collective Unconscious. #riff

[5/5/2024: From Thomas Sowell's *Conflict of Visions*: "Visions set the agenda for both thought and action. Visions fill in the necessarily large gaps in individual knowledge. Thus, for example, an individual may act in one way in some area in which he has great knowledge, but in just the opposite way elsewhere, where he is relying on a vision he has never tested empirically. A doctor may be a conservative on medical issues and a liberal on social and political issues, or vice versa."]

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If ChatGPT was available in Jesus's time, perhaps we would have understood him as being generated by it.

5/5/2024

Sadly, Frank Stella has passed at 87. All the Silent artists are going. I fear Jasper Johns will be next. I'm still inspired by his DIY spirit—that you didn't need training to just do it—very rock 'n' roll in a way, where you could make art or music just through emulation. "I really wanted more than anything to make art that was as good as the good artists were making. I wanted to make art someday — and I didn't expect it to be that way right away..." I find myself thinking along the same lines, or using the same techniques, such as titling schemas. For example, he used chapter titles from *Moby Dick* for titles of the works, whereas I use old paint colors from the 50s (*Peripherique*). I thought his big colorful shaped-canvas works were fantastic. I wasn't fond of the sculptures of found objects.

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For "Supersoul Sunday": Marianne Williamson: "Towards the beginning of my campaign I received a call from the

FBI asking me to come into their office in D.C. I was told I would be given the exact same briefing they gave every other candidate, then was informed of all the dirty tricks I should expect from foreign adversaries such as China, Russia or Iran. I did experience those dirty tricks, but they weren't from there. They were from here." I still think all of this is an echo from 9/11, which was the planting of the seed of division in the US, or its "growth hormone".

While I was walking along the lake at Belmont Harbor yesterday afternoon f/k/a "The Rocks", I noticed that many of the people there were in their 20s and reading books, which I thought was interesting. One guy was reading *Slouching Towards Bethlehem,* a Didion fan, or to become one). But what struck me was the thought that none of them have a direct memory of 9/11, grew up in an entirely post-9/11 world, and are social media natives. I also thought about "3 Presidents" , i.e. the 3 presidents that were in office during your 30s-60s. My 3 Presidents were Clinton, Bush, and Obama. They haven't reached the point where that would even begin—if there are in fact US Presidents as we knew them. They must know what's at stake in 2024. I knew what was at stake in 1984. I'm glad Reagan wasn't in my "triumvirate."

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Interesting Underwater Cave (Blue Hole) discovered directly off the east coast of Mexico that is completely abysmal. It's the "vantablack" of the sea. It's also a good metaphor for the unknown. My thought was that it's a dormant lava vent. (Myron Cook would know...)

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I noticed that you can also have "nose worms" as we have ear worms. So if you smell something pungent and smell it for long enough, the smell will come back to you later on.

5/5/2025

There are missing teeth in AI. There will always be gaps, but we work around the gaps, or fill them in if we know what is missing, but it takes work to "mend" the internet. Imagine if you had to fix dead hyperlinks in everything you've written on the internet since 1998. We are always working in "windows" of information by default and you have to make a concerted effort to widen those windows to revisit what you might have been interested in 15 or 20 years ago. A diary is a good way to do this. Your 30s are a good time to start keeping diaries or running lists.

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Young people seem to like the stories behind how 60s songs came together as collaborations. Yesterday, I was watching a video with Ray Manzarek talking about how *Light My Fire* came together. What we seem to want are stories, even if they're confabulated. At the time you're making something, those stories don't exist, but you might be able to tell them at some point. Stories give life magic. People mostly want stories of both personal success and cooperation because it's the biggest wish of our lives. The other big wish is to avoid failure. It's how humans are built psychologically. This narrative duality is what caused Donald Trump to appear in world history.

If you have kids, you should be active in promoting an activist agenda for climate change. But will the kids really care? They may begin to care but will depend on what path they take. If they don't attend college they certainly won't. They

will be working an 8-6 job, and be too tired for anything else. By the time they're in their 40s all they will want to do is retire and drop out and do mostly nothing.

May 6ths

5/6/2021

Watched some interviews with Sting yesterday on YouTube taken in the late 80s and early 90s around the *Nothing Like the Sun* and *Soul Cages* albums. What struck me was that this whole idea of music bringing awareness to world issues never really worked and it's still not working. Climate change was in the news at that time as well, but it was a page-six thing, or there might have been some featured articles and documentaries about it. It may be happening more now on social media but it's still very much a "pull" phenomenon. Greta Thunberg was "hashtaggy" a few years ago, but I've heard nothing since. It's not that the news isn't there—it just isn't trending. In order for activism to be effective it has to consistently trend. It's very much like the Honeymoon effect. Artists can create those Honeymoon or halo effects. Typically what happens with artists is that they feel a need to be involved as activists, but it doesn't work for everyone. They have to have the archetype.

One song I really liked—and still like—is *They Dance Alone*. It's very interesting musically. But I was thinking at the time that it was 15 years too late. The Pinochet coup in Chile was in September of 1973 (9/11) and the *Nothing Like the Sun* album came out in 1988.

What should happen is that an artist might turn fans on to some issue and they take it from there. In retrospect, Sting might have raised my awareness of environmental issues, and so I'd watch documentaries and read books on it. *Terrestrial Episode* was done around that time. But music isn't

going to stop coups d'etat. Coups are against liberalism qua socialism.

Earlier in the evening I was watching a documentary about Sister Amy, an early 20th century Pentecostal preacher. Early in her career she and her husband went to China on an Evangelist mission. It never worked: they were so struck by the differences between the two cultures. She couldn't get used to the cuisine and he generally didn't like being there and they probably left with the idea that such missions are ineffective in forcing paradigm shifts. It might not work in music either. It just turns out to be plain old music. Visual art can be a bit more effective, such as agitprop graphic arts, the stuff Shepard Fairey does.

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Some people have a natural tendency to set boundaries around things. Take the city and country for example: Some people can leave the city and go into the country and only see elements of the city metaphorically and vice versa, with the main metaphor being tall trees/skyscrapers. This goes back to my idea about what I call "this but not that". Musicians are known for wanting to do something for a particular reason but they won't go beyond those objectives. They might want to learn cover songs but never go beyond it, such as learning the theory behind them. There's only a desire to take one element—this but not that.

5/6/2023

I'm still working on a track for the current album, which started in March and is now marching up in time. I've decided at this point the heuristic that I'm going to be using is that a piece for a month will be either when it started or when it was finished, so that period might be 3 months, or it might be 6 or 9 months. This makes more sense because I don't want to be punching a clock. In Jenny O'Dell's book she was talking about a solar time which I think is more logical because that's what most organisms follow. The fact that human lives are organized by patterned time, where months and seasons are a kind of "meter". Another analogy I like is "time remapping" in video where you can keyframe a frame and move it around on the x-axis of time. Knowing something is 10 light years away, for example, means, at least in the imagination, we can "remap" time in such a way that we can quickly go there. So instead of proceeding through the months sequentially, we can go from January to June, and back to April. The final track order of the album will probably be something like this. The order in which a story unfolds has nothing to do with sequential time or any other time frame.

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Film: *Uppercase Print*, a Romanian film. Walked out of my own living room. I now have no interest in Romanian culture or history. The moral of the story is that dictators destroy civilizations with their toxic utopias.
5/6/2025

More contentious now: "I can have the life I want". There's an epic philosophical battle between Emersonian self-reliance and the Enlightenment spirit of natural talents (Rousseau). I've been in the latter as long as I can remember--as

have many Boomer and GenX artists. Millennials less-so. Interesting: I received a new "writing badge" from Grammerly, the totalitarian school marm that tracks every punctuation mark, and it says, ""Blue-sky thinking" describes an outlook that's open-minded, imaginative, and free from constraints or preconceived notions. Your ideas can soar, unburdened by restrictions. Sounds like just the right mindset for realizing your writing dreams, doesn't it?" So that's a good description for me I suppose, not that anyone would clap for me. People want you to be a slogger, not a blogger. Humanity's hedonic zero has always been abysmal, so when they see someone rise above that they give you the silent treatment. Isn't life wonderful? A few days ago I was watching a video by Martha Beck, who is always goo-goo-ga-ga cheery as if she were talking to babies. I kind of like it as it's uplifting, but I'm cynical and skeptical. Her view of the new epoch for civilization is a horizontal pool with one level as opposed to vertical, pyramidal, and hierarchical. I can't agree with this. If we're miserable and fearful to begin with it's almost ridiculous to think we're again revisting the Golden Age idea. We felt that in 2000 with the internet, and look where we are. That was snuffed out in 18 months with 9/11. Perhaps what she's feeling is the First Turning which I think may be for rich white people forming a new (heterosexual) Aryan race who will be moving towards immortal and genetically-engineered humans. After all, this is a Sci-Fi trope as old as the hills.

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Interesting observation: artificial intelligence looks at language in the form of patterns, which is similar to how some musicians look at music as patterns. But historically, the way that musicians have learned music is through notation and theory. But that all fell away beginning in the 1960s. So all

the musicians who learn music, learn through pattern recognition, which is what artificial intelligence and large language models are doing now. It's a less intimate knowledge. It's a convenient form of knowledge that involves less work.

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Of course we have the caring for the disabled. But I think there are also people who have a caring disability, which means it's hard for them to care when they should. But some are so disabled that even though they try, they still remain disabled. I had a hard time caring about jobs. No matter how much I cared, no matter how much effort I put into caring, nothing ever worked. So many of us have been set up to fail, and I think that's why there's this pervasive rage in the United States and in the Western world–that no matter how hard we try, we just won't get anywhere. So more and more people are dropping out, lying flat. I know exactly what the air traffic controllers are feeling. I was traumatized almost daily at a law firm that I used to work for that had terrible technology, their network was crap and you couldn't do your job, then you'd get blamed for it. But I wasn't allowed to take 6 weeks off. I got the rest of my life off.

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Nice walk in evening. This is peak fragrance from all the flowering trees. Scents of lilac (which I never liked), a redolence of hazelnut, fragrance of a dryer sheet coming from a dryer vent.

May 7ths

5/7/2021

We have scoring for picture, we have scoring for orchestra, and now we have scoring for sound. It seems odd that we would score for sound because that's the material that we use for scoring, but this is the evolution of music from music that was written primarily on manuscript paper by composers and arrangers, and that's fading quickly. Now anyone can be a composer because that's all that's required are sound libraries and some type of controller, or even AI-generation. If there's some kind of notation that comes out of that from MIDI then that's just a side effect. We've always scored on manuscript paper.

On my walk today I was thinking about possibly creating a string quartet for one of the Brassai pieces. It would seem to really fit in with 1930s Paris. Essentially, I am "scoring" the sound of Paris in 1934. (The past couple months I've been working right in the score. I actually like it because it allows me to think architecturally (or structurally) disabused of "interior decoration": selecting paint colors, flooring, window treatments, lighting, and so on. I just want to be under the hood. Interesting: in the future if/when all vehicles are electric, what would be "under the hood" in the idiomatic sense?)

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The current book I'm reading is *Analogia: The Emergence Of Technology Beyond Programmable Control* by George Dyson, son of the late Freeman Dyson. There's a section in here that piqued my interest because it relates to my "ancient AI" idea–that there are algorithms that have existed in the

universe since the beginning of time. There's a paragraph that clearly explains it: "Nature evolved analog computers known as nervous systems that embody information absorbed from them. They learn. They learn to control their own behavior and they learn to control their environment, including the behavior of other organisms and their own end of other kinds."It's an ancient artificial intelligence. He was also saying that analog computers embrace noise in order to function efficiently. Ever since we've been working with computers–even using simple software programs and using the copy and paste function you can easily make copies of text but very often we'll paste something but not change it and so errors keep propagating and become a form of noise, but it's in a digital environment and it's digital noise, It's not analog and it's not functioning efficiently. Perhaps there's an accumulation of errors over decades that we've wrongfully accepted as facts. Now with social networking it's almost all noise and it's hard to find the signal in it, so we use various things like hashtags in order to create more signal but it hasn't worked. Where is the ancient AI in social media and how can we apply analog computing stability in social networking and AI? The "ancient AI" would have been one that a civilization learned to control–find the Signal.

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If in fact we are now just scoring for sound and not scoring for orchestra, the whole canon of classical music will just be reduced to sound because people probably will never associate it with notation–they'll never look at the score–and if they do it'll just be on the internet as a small image or maybe a PDF. It won't be like the paper score where you can easily follow along. So the sound is becoming deracinated from the notation. People might listen to classical music but there'll be no association with it as notation as was conceived by the composer. Classical music as sound will be co-mingled with

everything else. And if it's used it'll just be used as a sample in a sonic universe with no linkage back. Perhaps in the future there won't be a young person who will hear a piece by Stravinsky or Debussy and be able to link it with the score or learn from the score because they're not being published anymore–at least not in book form, which I think is more efficient–you can just grab it off your shelf without having to dial it up. There's a whole universe of learning that's going to fall as it happens in all the arts. Music is moving towards being about sound and it's where composition is going. You might have a detailed analysis of scores in a YouTube video but that's not the same as you yourself studying it.

[5/7/2025: There actually might be more detailed information digitally, and now with AI in the loop. The bigger issue is attention and where we're placing our focus. I've noticed more generally that musicians are spending more time with video production than studying music. If they're teaching, there are no exercises for the student, so they're basically getting overviews].

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As regards ambient music, I think I've exhausted the possibilities. I don't get a lot out of it for a long period of time. Then there's the whole aspect of algorithmic music where it's cybernetic and made by rules, and perhaps another way of creating a form of notation and perhaps that's where we're going.

It's interesting how music has become a process of extracting one element that we want. It's become a process of isolation. In terms of sound, we hear the sound of a guitar or an amp with effects and you say, "I like that sound, I want to use just that sound"–it doesn't matter what music it came from or who the artist was. But it's a process that's baked in the

cake since sampling started 30 years ago. With guitar sounds you could go on to YouTube and there's thousands of videos about people reviewing effects and amps. It's something that's never really appealed to me. I don't focus on that–I want to focus on the music and then the music can be decorated or "skinned".

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Needless to say, sound is hugely important to the success of a song. The way that songwriters seem to be creating content these days is with cloud software or phone apps. They start with a sound or beat and they build it up from there perhaps with some lyrics, and then that spins out the content–to the extent that can be rearranged in some way to where it's just chords and melody (if you can reduce it to that) or just simply play it on a guitar or piano then I think you've done it. I can work both ways, but I tend to work the old way where I just sit down with a guitar and write down the melody and chords, and then start production. Perhaps that's the wrong way these days, but for me the creativity is at the compositional level. For a lot of people the creativity is at the production level. I haven't bridged that gap. What I need is an assistant to actually do that. Doing the writing, the tracking, as well as overall production is too much multitasking for me. To the extent that they can happen simultaneously then that's the magic. I'm less concerned about what the guitars sound like and I'm less likely to approach it from that aspect. I don't like endless tweaking.

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I was wondering how long it would take an AI to grow up. It takes a human about 25 years to be hardwired but there's the possibility for "neuroplasticity" that we think goes on through life.

[5/7/2025: AI is already "grown up"--artificially. The "neuroplasticity" idea is interesting which would mean it would always be correcting itself. After all, if you're conscious, you'll potentially have a conscience].

5/7/2022

Is the Hyperlink Dead? If you've been writing on the internet for the past 25 years, the hyperlinks that we've set probably no longer work. This is why I have been using hyperlinks less. I only use them if I can be certain that the link will be permanent. For example, I will link to a piece of art only from the museum or collection that holds it. This is not to say that this link won't change in the future, but it is less likely to change.

We think of online videos as being permanent, but they can be taken down at any time. We can assign it a permanent hyperlink to the Wayback Machine, but that doesn't typically upload the video itself. Even the Archive itself is somewhat impermanent.

What we have realized in Ukraine is that the servers that store most of our digital artifacts are in buildings that no longer exist.

As Stewart Brand wrote In the late 1990s (on the more indelible Edge.org), it is *Written On the Wind*.

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Mills Park is essentially the backyard of the old Farson House, now called the Pleasant Home, on Pleasant Street in Oak Park. It's one of my favorite parks. It's essentially Farson's backyard. The building is now owned by the Park District and they rent it out for weddings and so on. There's

a jazz band playing on the front porch, which is very large. (Front porches were very large at the time). It's typical of these events that the music has to be jazz or classical. It just kind of goes with the decoration.

5/7/2023

Watched more of the coronation. What you realize is that lots of human universals and rituals are "pompous", i.e. they look ridiculous from the vantage-point of modernity. In some ways, it is "postmodern" in that people seem to be doing silly things for the sake of being taken seriously (or not).

5/7/2024

The civil defense sirens were so interesting this morning with a light rain. Pitches are F, B D, F, Gb. A "Cagean" moment.

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There are some absolutely captivating videos of tornadoes now—and very close-up to where you can hear them (although camera mics don't have wind screens). You see debris flying in the air, which appear small but are very large and could be cars. Then you realize, this is just atmosphere—a movement of air which doesn't care about where it goes or what's in its way. It's very non-personal and indiscriminate. It's a reminder that we have an atmosphere at all.

5/7/2025

I feel everything is highly judged these days. An artist can't get away with any old 60s thing. You can't easily be a conceptual artist because your 60s peers (in the 60s and older) will judge you. You're supposed to be miserable at that age and not engaging in arty hijinks. This is what has been going through the back of my mind as I've been working on the video for *Backs of the Photographs*. No one I know is going to appreciate this because the expectation is that I should be painting landscapes and taking pictures of flowers.

Watched BBC interview with Biden. One gets the sense that the old guard is on its way out and the paradigm shift has happened. It make me downright scared. We're entering an age of sink or swim--survival of the fittest, even European nations. The borders are back and they have grown walls. Every country is going to have to have its own military to defend them, including Canada and Mexico.

May 8ths

5/8/2021

On "metanorms": Politics has always operated on them, a term coined by Robert Axelrod in the 80s. There are the normal norms that we think society abides by but it's the metanorms that are the "real world".

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Redefinition seems to have become a human universal. In order for us to evolve we have to continually redefine ourselves. But how is that defined given the tsunami of information?

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Neoliberalism makes us all want to feed the machine, and we feel great when we've done it. It gives us something back for the work that we put into nourishing it. It's grown into this kind of "pet" that does what we want. Many people who have trained the old neoliberalism pet very well have become billionaires in the process, and all of us who embraced the idea of neoliberalism may have benefited, but it still seems crazy that neoliberalism can work in the arts. Of course you have to make money making your art but this whole thing with the blockchain and selling things that can't justify the prices is just mindlessly feeding the machine, thinking there's something we're going to get back, we just we just sell our souls in the process.

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Watched interview with Ron Carter. What I said a long time ago was that jazz sounds like an art but it's really more like a science. He comes from a time when jazz was more like a physics–all this analysis that went into improvisation, knowing the chord changes, and so on. But what I learned from this interview is that it's much more intuitive than I thought. You have to know the changes of course, but it's the essence of improvisation that is more spontaneous and free but the underlying science of it does matter as it creates a good foundation. You will find that most jazz players will understand music theory and don't avoid it like in pop music where it seems to not be important. You don't want to have rules. Jazz sounds free but it has lots of rules, and you can move on a continuum of staying within the rules and breaking the rules, and that's where the art comes in and the science as well.

***

Working on one of the Brassai pieces for MFP which has complex changes that are very jazz-like but I don't consider it jazz. It just comes out that way because this particular idea started on a guitar with a jazzy chord cluster. Very often I have to go to the keyboard to find out what it is and then take it from there.

I can approach something from a jazz level but I won't consider it jazz–considering how invested I am in the genre. Sometimes you have to avoid jazz because it's too easy for it to slip into Steely Dan, especially with a Rhodes. The fact that I'm working on an acoustic guitar would seem to make it more folky. But it has major seventh chords in it so it's definitely going to sound jazzy because of its natural verticality.

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There's this idea that if someone has said something, they can lay claim to it–they are the first person who etched it in stone, and they're quoted accordingly. But if you look, you'll find that other people have said it in the past, others will say it in the future, and maybe they'll attribute it to that person. There's an "ownership of knowledge" that seems to be prevailing where people are following certain kinds of knowledge and attributing it to one person. That's kind of unfair because knowledge is free and we can connect bits of knowledge and create new knowledge without having to always think about who said it. Knowledge is "ethereal" and might have existed for a long time. One of the things I've always said is that if it rhymes somebody has already thought of it and relates to the idea of the rhythms of language being involved in the dissemination of ideas. A song chorus is a dissemination of an idea–a meme. A ditty or short song is a meme. Memes erase individuality. One person can say that they thought of it but at that point, once it becomes a meme it doesn't matter.

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Life is as transactional is the prevailing mood. It's the way that social media operates these days: I follow you, you follow me back, and if we don't do that reciprocally then there's no relationship and creates a tribal politics–a "metanorm".

5/8/2022

Indeed, there are epigenetic effects that ripple through history. I wonder whether totalitarian societies are actually epigenetically "cleansed" and there are no ripple effects. They are brainwashed to be happy.

I suspect my mother was traumatized by an elder or an elder of an elder, then the trauma was re-activated by family stress.

***

Consider that in 50 years we had the capability of looking at our entire history of what we've done on the internet–in terms of the ratings that we've left on various sites, for example Goodreads. Would it mean anything if you found that an average rating was 3 stars, that it was a good book, and so on? If the person is no longer living and has no way of elaborating on it we just jump to conclusions. But that's probably been the case throughout history. But how much time are people going to spend trying to weave together some kind of narrative through little data points? I don't think anybody does that except a historian or an archivist. I think more people should be doing that. That might be a good profession in the future–stitching together things that have faded out from the internet because the server isn't there or nobody ever kept a copy of a document, and to interpret that and see what it says.

5/8/2023

Possible Riff: Daily gun massacres, beginning with Columbine. Invariably the comments are that it was something seen in a film. A few nights ago when we got tired of scrolling around Amazon Prime we watched the (awful) *Knowing* (2009) with N. Cage. Back in October 1998 I wrote, "The real vehicle for social change is visual media because it has the capacity to simulate reality. Music is more a "passenger" than a vehicle. It's a manifestation of worlds created by things we see with our eyes."

My diary entry 10/9/1998 on-point: "Andrew Vachss, legal advocate, crime novelist, blues musician writes an essay in

Pulse magazine, "Can music be a vehicle for social change?" He makes a valid point that song lyrics are generally innocuous. The power of text (McLuhan: the invention of the alphabet) is somehow tamed when combined with music, not as powerful. (Does anyone really pay attention to the lyrics?) The real vehicle for social change is visual media because it has the capacity to simulate reality. Music is more a "passeng er" than a vehicle. It's a manifestation of worlds created by things we see with our eyes. But the power of pop music is largely dependent on whose ears are hearing it. The message is subjective, even if it's specific."

5/8/2024

I like re-stumbling on articles I'd saved years ago, sometimes realizing I've never fully read them. New thoughts: You can be wired as a conservative, yet the generation you were born into will create inner conflicts. For example, it may be difficult for younger boomers born 1958-1964 to understand the worldview of conservative older boomers or silents, or conservative anything, yet the conservative hard wiring is always shorting out in context with what's happening in the world now. I consider myself to be a 60s liberal as a result of being glued to 60s and 70s pop music. Either a person is going to let that gloss over their lives as a "phase", or it's going to have deep roots—in any new generation. Gen-Z has "20s" liberals. It can also work with deeply-rooted conservatism and religiosity, which create the same power of identity. This creates a feeling of wanting to guard and protect those deep roots, similar to wanting to protect your heroes. In music, it's bands. In religion and politics, it's values. Sometimes the boundary is more porous where they overlap considerably to where people will be both a Trump supporter and a church-goer because they inhabit a space where they have allowed those things to have commonalities shared with a large community, which resolves feelings of doubt or

cognitive dissonance. Also, my own personal observations of conservatives is that they have a higher tolerance for meting out cruelty against others because of the idea of discipline—that people need to be spanked. To liberals it's always been un-cool, with "cool" being one of their most defining and powerful ideals, along with diversity. I think the "cool" word is etched in stone, or rather, the tectonic plate of Western culture. We're all on the same plate really, when we seem to think we're on separate ones and they're creating [the illusion] of earthquakes.] I contend, as well as other liberals, is that if people are allowed to be true to their archetypes, there would be a lot less anxiety. But conservatives are about "shoulds" and punishments if you don't follow them, or the parental voices that echo through the generations.

Back in 1995, I wrote a perky pop song called *Mr. PC,* using the title of the John Coltrane jazz tune. The lyrics were: "Mr. PC, what should I be, Mr. PC, will I ever be me?". This is essentially my feeling about how liberals view conservatives. We feel we have to always be checking in with them to see if we're in line with what they think we should be, but we ask ourselves "Will I ever be me?", which is in line what we think we should be. We see self-actualization as the ultimate goal, whereas conservatives see it as group-actualization. This is why fascism is on the rise.

***

I was shopping at the grocery store and had a title idea: *Mystical Entertainer,* and I started silently scatting it over the music that was playing in the background. I was thinking that most people who call themselves modern-day mystics or spiritualists are essentially entertainers.

5/8/2025

White smoke signals at the Vatican 1130 CDT. It could be a transsexual from Afghanistan, but turns out that it's the Cardinal from Chicago, now Pope Leo XIV, the first US pope. So ironic now that the US has slid into authoritarianism. He'll probably follow Pope Pius and mostly stay out of the fray, but he is American, a Boomer born in the 50s in the real MAGA (not the Disneyland version), the era to be made great again.

As I was watching it live there was an interesting juxtaposition of bell ringing and a brass ensemble (Bb). It gave me an idea, so I scored up *Oleo*. It's polytonal with the low strings playing a 3-bar repeating phrase of E-naturals and B-naturals with oscillating G minor and E major triads.

5/8/2005: "News has become more and more idiotic. Once you have decided what's important to know, news generally becomes less important to day-to-day functioning."

[5/8/2025: Looking back 20 years it was the advent of the internet that stoked news idiocy, 30 years before in 1995 it was the post-Rodney King, post-Waco, post-OJ, post-Oklahoma City world that were in the 24-hour news cycles, 40 years ago in 1985 it seemed less insane. There was no way to vent online, and we did fine].

May 9ths

5/9/2022

In terms of epigenetic effects and how trauma ripples through the generations, I wonder if your native country matters–such that if you are a native North Korean or Russian, whether it has a "cleansing" effect given that people get brainwashed into thinking that everything is okay and that there's a bright future and consequently nobody is really stressed. Whereas in Ukraine, the scars are going to ripple through the generations for hundreds of years, as it does in other countries. It's strange that in authoritarian governments people are brainwashed to be happy. If you look at culture is in North Korea they all seem to be happy, but they're brainwashed to be happy, or fake that they are. #riff

5/9/2023

Just when I think a mix is reaching the finish line it sounds wrong again. I think the current track is over-produced and pompous. Perhaps it's the hangover from the coronation. Think I like the jazz bass part, but that sounds a bit forced as well. This piece wants to be more "live". All music is enhanced by being played live, although not in traditional scored pieces because of its fixedness. It can't be fixed in the mix, or fixed in any substantial way. In this way, scored music is more like a book than it is music.

The other thing that concerns me is that I'm working too much on one piece. If it was a painting I'd keep laying things on and scraping them off and it might turn out to be mushy gruel. This is why creativity can always be a learning experience. Of course, I (the producer in me) could do lots of different mixes, but I feel I need to move on because I'm

missing out on other songs. (This diary is helpful because I can analyze these logjams and self-flagellate as well).

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If you've ever lived in an apartment or other multi-unit building the doors opening and closing become a "clock". As people have moved in and out, the clocks change. There was someone who moved in several months ago and what I intuited from the sound of the doors is that he has a job perhaps at a hospital or somewhere where he works the graveyard shift, 11 to 7. I hear him leave at about 10P and returns at 8A, almost on the dot. Other times the pattern changes. When you're out in the wild you see the same people at the same times, and then all of a sudden you realize you don't see (or hear) them any longer. ("Life is like your very own bus, people get on, people get off, sometimes they get back on every day at the same time, and sometimes you never see them again...")

5/9/2024

Article re: kids stop reading for fun at around 9 years old. ("Decline by 9").[2] This is the equivalent of the transition around the age of 30 where adults are checking out of pop culture (and sometimes technology) and don't care about things they used to care about. Everyone has a "moving on" point but I think it's collectively erosive. In terms of reading for adults, I'm hearing more people say they can't get through a 300-page book. It could be that we're moving away from reading linearly. Or it might have something to do with the ability to "click away" to find something that gratifies us more, in comparison to previous experiences we've had.

2. https://slate.com/culture/2024/05/kids-reading-fun-books-decline-by-nine-crisis.html

In terms of book reading, especially non-fiction, I want to read something that I haven't seen elsewhere. But the internet is that "elsewhere"—a place where we can find things that already exist. I find that most of the books that I've chosen to read because of a book review (usually on the ol' Arts & Letters Daily) haven't been that interesting in terms of new information. For younger readers it's BookTok, but that is similarly imperfect. This is because it's being churned on the internet, YouTube, and with LLMs. The distractions in younger people could be the result this same phenomenon: They're looking for something that's truly interesting; they're making new interesting connections instead of the usual churning. In fact, book reading for me is more "churning the pages", and I find myself first consulting the Index to find access points. I think we're looking for information now—something that can be passed around on social media. Teachers are partially correct in cutting to the chase in terms of making new connections between disparate bits of information, which is a quicker way to learn something rather than spending a week on one book cover-to-cover. But storytelling is also a valid way of cutting to the chase that could be equally transforming. We're all looking for that satisfying savory experience as we would when we're hungry for a favorite comfort food. Martha Beck says it might be that people are hyper-curious and creative, and are quickly attempting to create inspirational sparks. Or it could simply be a matter of selective attention driven by the curiosity searching for salient (savory) pieces of information that satiates craving for something that is usually undefined, but it's still all about gorging on information in order to feel full.

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General observation: In contrast to just 10 years ago, or certainly under Obama, no one cares about originality. Every-

thing has to be something they've seen before. No one is brave enough to show an interest in unique ideas. Again, they're looking for populist pretty pictures, especially if they have lots of Likes and Followers. ("I'll like it only if others have...") Fascism has returned in the West.

5/9/2025

Popes have typically not been catalysts for change, even peripherally. They suggest ways of behaving, but perhaps they should once and for all stop being so milquetoast about cruel dictatorships. He grew up with rock'n'roll on the radio and TV like everyone else in 1966, when bands were more popular than Jesus. I wonder if he voted for Reagan. I think he would have, and he probably voted for Clinton, and perhaps Bush and Obama. Not Trump for sure. If they had a way to do an MRI to see your politics that would be burned into the bones. MAGA is already calling him a Marxist puppet. He will be called other names. We have to remember that there have been 250 popes in history burned into the bones, not just the measly 250 years of US democracy. Marianne Williamson: "The Trump administration is an authoritarian regime, trampling over the rights of whomever doesn't align with their view of how America should operate. Americans have not even begun to feel the full force of the damage that Trump and Musk's policies will create - from lack of access to healthcare; to withdrawal of health and safety regulations in food..." A Pope should be defending this, but he won't. When your history is 1000 years, you don't need to say anything. They know it's full of cruelty and will happen again and again. The cloth is so stained that all other ones that get added won't make a difference. It's like adding a few more threads to a tightly woven tapestry. No one will see it. After 250 years it won't matter when it was done.

Now that there's a Pope Leo zeitgeist, particularly in Chicago, I wonder how many teens and 20-somethings are going to have a new interest in Catholicism, and what direction it will take. It's simply one door but there are many other doors in that antechamber. Some will be spiritually clueless churchgoers, others more interested in mysticism, gnosticism, and panpsychism. It's the latter interests that will prevail. My parents were church-goers who eventually stopped going, or just my Dad went alone. I don't think church-going can hold up in the 21st century without 'reforms". Perhaps if factory jobs come back that'll get them back in church as a part of the "what you're supposed to do" routines.

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These days, not only do we focus on the numbers, we focus on just one number, the number that seems critical to us. in fact, we're always just looking at a few things, and even just those few things can switch over time. This is why people seem to stop caring. It's not that they don't care it's just that the particular focus (the number they're zeroing in on) has changed for them. In creativity, you could be zeroing in on what you think is your laser focus, but is too narrow, boxing you in.

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When you use large language models to generate content it's a kind of "whispering". Like animals, we can't get into their minds, we just have to imagine what they might be thinking, and the same goes for LLMs. There have been times, rare, when what you created as a lyric creates the most perfect music, other times it simply doesn't understand the connection between language and music. You could generate it 30 times, and it still won't understand it. What it's

doing is squeezing the rhythms in the stems to the perceived rhythms in the words. When you write music manually, you don't have those constraints; you can write something in 6/8 or 12/8, however, the music feels. This isn't happening (yet) with AI. So far, we haven't been able to give specific instructions to LLMs, but I would imagine it's possible, but at what cost, and more importantly, what is the cost to creativity--not to mention the environment because of the energy demands of AI? After creating music with AI for about 6 months, I have to make a concerted effort to focus only on the music, so I notate as much as possible--even just on paper.

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Watched Professor of Rock video about random happy accidents in sessions. Earlier I was talking with a friend about using orange in minimal paintings and I brought up "orangey" like it was used in The Cars' *Bye Bye Love*. "Orange" is a bad word because it's mostly unsingable. (If you sing "orangey" at a slow tempo it sounds like "orgy") They could have used "sunset sky", but pop lyrics aren't supposed to be logical or grammatically correct, or perhaps it's simply a matter of choosing a vocal take, even if the words are clumsy. It's about how they're mapped rhythmically. At fast tempos, the vowels are too short. Consonants become more of a "percussion" and grist for clever wordplay. Also watched a video where Bob Seger was asked about the lyrics of *Against the Wind* and the "Wish I didn't know now what I didn't know then" line. It's bad grammar but it's what you wanted to say, even if it's not saying anything, but meaning something but you don't know exactly.

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Consilience by E.O. Wilson was a seminal book for me as an interdisciplinary artist–the idea that the humanities could overlap with the sciences. This was also the time when the Third Culture movement began. I recall lots of artists being involved in it. I named my record company after the book.

May 10ths

5/10/2021

If a nostalgia trip is a traveling through time, ETs definitely know the feeling. They'd be like David Bowie floating in a tin can, feeling isolation and loneliness at any point on their journey, however they're doing it–in a spacecraft or in some other dimensions. If they are sentient beings, even sentient machines, they could feel nostalgia and be homesick. They say they are already here or have been here all along, so they must be feeling nostalgic for something.

Nostalgia is a memory that is disconnected to time and disconnected to our own solar system and exists in many dimensions at once. An interesting thought experiment could be a story about nostalgia trips as a way of taking a "vacation", traveling from "coast to coast". While you're traveling you're having new experiences, but also memories–and then when you come back from your nostalgia trip you're feeling all the other nostalgias–memories of nostalgic feelings.

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It's interesting to go through the questions that people ask on Quora of a musical nature. One of them recently was, "How long will it take me to learn music theory and what are the most difficult instruments to play?" My response was, "About four years, then about two years or more–or maybe even a whole lifetime to learn how to apply it to what you're attempting to do. The most difficult instruments would include piano and stringed instruments. That'll keep you busy for the rest of your life." You can plateau and get to some level of proficiency but it doesn't stay that way. Music requires maintenance. Once you've spent four to six years where you

can do it in your sleep then you can go about your business making art, but once the art has a certain requirement of skill then you have to go back and practice. All instrumentalists know this. There's nothing that's automatic. For the musicians who want to maintain a good skill level. To be able to play flurries of 16th notes at a fast tempo on guitar (or maybe even on a bass) you're going to have to maintain that, probably with some repetitive stress injury involved. So you have to ask the question whether it's practical to even spend all the time to be able to do that with no real musical application. It's just a way to show off that you have these musical abilities. But musical ability has to do with a lot more than having the facility to play lots of 16th notes. In fact, playing at slow tempos with very long note values in some ensemble settings could be just as skillful and is actually more practical because there's music involved, rather than people just noodling around on their instrument.

Some people can probably learn music theory faster than I did–maybe they learned it in six months. I'm sure there are claims on YouTube that you can learn music theory in three months or six weeks, and maybe that's true. Maybe it'll take a couple of days and then you can start making your music and it'll be fascinating. That works too. I didn't take that road and glad that I didn't because I would have been stuck in pattern mode, which is the way a lot of musicians play–or they just want to play passages of 16th notes at fast tempos, then they get frustrated when they can't. Not all music is fast. There's no music that was written by any composer that just involved continuous flurries of 16th notes. However, Bach did it but they were etudes, so they had musical nutrition in them. If you did a harmonic analysis, there's a lot of substance there. Not only are you learning proficiency and getting skill and dexterity, you're learning theory as well.

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We're becoming a society of futurists–again. The original Futurists were from early 20th century Italy, started by Marinetti in 1908 and then appropriated later by Mussolini. But subsequently it became a really interesting art movement which continued on for decades in many countries, then died out. A lot of the things that came out of Futurism as an art form or style were very aesthetically interesting, and many of those ideas still exist in graphic arts practice today. Some of it had gotten into music as well. What Stravinsky was doing with the ballets could have been considered Futurism but actually wasn't because I don't think he completely wanted to dismiss the old. The early ballets were just a phase and he went back to the old styles with his neoclassicist work and his rearrangements of Bach and other baroque works, so he eventually became reverent of that material–he wasn't tossing it away. What I think we're doing now is we're reflexively pushing the past away–we're not going to do any of that old stuff anymore. It's okay to do that for a while because it's interesting and gives you more perspective. People who are stuck in the past need to do the opposite–they need to become a Futurist for a while for balance.

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Monday is typically artificial intelligence day because I get the Google Alert results on Monday morning. They have this new software for DJs called Algoriddum, like the reggae "riddum" thing. It reminds me of the idea I had about 10 years ago about Algorithm Jockeys. They were characters in *Reset 2046*, called "AJs". It seems to be taking hold. That's where AI is going to be used because it's hard to use AI with traditional instruments, because they exist in a different world, but when you're in the world of a DJ, where there are lots more controllers, all those things fit well into the AI world because they're dealing with data on the back end.

Apparently, AI music is now being applied to medicine–"Is AI music the best medicine?" This goes back to the 1970s with the immersion tanks, etc., Having composed ambient music I didn't always think of it as being a treatment, but at one point I was considering creating a surround sound environment where people would go into an immersion tank of sound that would massage the body. If you take a speaker and hold it in your hand, and you put that at a kind of loud volume with more bass frequencies in it, and pass it over your body, you can feel those vibrations like a massage. Obviously, they can have pitch, and they can have music. It's part of the reason that people like to go to concerts because they can feel the vibrations. Most of the time we listen to music in our heads. My music is always in my head because I'm always doing recording and mixing, and very seldom do I really feel bass frequencies, even though I'm a bass player. I'm not always feeling those bass frequencies; I'm always *thinking* about them and "massaging" the frequency ranges with EQs. It's nice that they're continuing this with music as a kind of therapy, but it's not a new idea.

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In all the articles that I've been reading, they're always trying to sell the idea of AI being creative. There's this website called "Tech the Lead Creative AI–the best examples of artificial intelligence in photography, art, writing, music, and gaming." Is AI capable of creativity? The answer is definitely "yes". "If you agree with the definition of creativity proposed by science, there are dozens of examples in this sense, some more successful than others, starting from an AI that creates poems or stories to neural networks that can come up with names or give life to old photos." In regard to the old photos, they have a picture of Lincoln with his hoary face circa 1864--and then they have a version that makes him look a little bit younger, but this is basically Photoshop.

What does AI have to do with it? It's automatic Photoshop, so we can create thousands of these, put them in a grid, and then sell them for $50,000 [like Beeple]? It's the idea of the world reflected in the mirror, and then you put the reflected mirror inside a room of mirrors. Everything is looking at everything else, and we're just seeing a composite as a grid. It doesn't matter what's in the grid; it's just that there's an experience of it, so basically it's experiential. There are people who don't want it intellectualized–they don't want to have to articulate why it is that they do what they do, and that's the definition of pop art essentially. I think a practicing artist always has to ask the questions, and what you want to have coming back at you is something that's interesting. I can't see why this is interesting, so I'd like to hear how people explain this and how it fits into their creative practice. I wonder how many young people who are just getting into being musicians with this kind of stuff are going to progress and evolve over the years. I started music with just a guitar that had four strings on it, and maybe this is the version of the guitar with four strings.

All this stuff has been the wish since the 1950s. Think of all the Popular Mechanics cover stories. James Howard Kunstler called it "yesterday's tomorrows," and we're still wishing for them.

There's this very controversial new algorithm that Spotify has developed, where it detects emotions in voices (as well as voice errors like I'm making now). Apparently, what they do is take the [prosody] of the voice and then they associate music with it. That's how I understand it. That's very interesting from a language standpoint because music and language are joined at the hip with the prosody in our individual voices, and can become melodic or be monotone, and those kinds of things can conceivably be mapped to MIDI data, so you can take speech and convert it into notation with dynamics

and articulations. But it probably wouldn't be very useful. There would be all kinds of weird syncopations and full of ties and weird note values. It's good that people are having such a strong reaction against these things because this stuff is being pushed very hard by these companies to create products in order to monetize them.

There's a glut of new functions and new products that you could use to promote your music. One could spend all day just exploring them to see how you could use them. All these companies are always pushing features as their own marketing strategy.

5/10/2022

Lyrics to pop songs seldom mean anything—at least at the point they are written. But they can gather meaning over time. If you reverse-engineer them you realize the idea must have been the title because it's in the hook, then beyond the first stanza, the rest is love song filler: "Hey, girl, stop what you're doin', Hey, girl, you'll drive me to ruin, I don't know what it is I like about you, but I like it a lot..."

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The current book I'm reading is *Authority and Freedom* by Jed Perl, a short book about 140 pages with fairly large text, so it's a pretty quick read. I like it a lot because it says a lot of the things that I've said over the years about creativity, especially over the past couple years, where I've kind of returned to tradition–so I'm just writing more songs and string quartets. I felt that those skills were going to seed, not that my skills were that great. I like the feeling of putting notes on a staff. I don't know why that is. It's something that's very soothing and comforting.

A passage that I really like on page 96: "It's important to remember that the competition between freedom and authority is not necessarily an evolutionary progress. Often it's a cyclical process as much as creative spirits will play fast and loose with forms of authority, they're also free to reassert older conventions, or at least their own earlier view of the conventions." That's exactly what I'm doing by revisiting the styles of music that I liked in the 1980s and 1990s. *Frontiers* is kind of a compilation of that–a nostalgia trip of my own musical history. It's an interesting process of putting together what I've learned after the period when I was writing songs or mostly ambient music, and reactivating and doing those other older things. That's not to say that I'm not going to move on to something else. I might even go back to making art, which contributes to the idea of holistic creativity, where you don't have to do one thing for your entire life; You can go into periods and revisit periods–like the neoclassicist movement that many composers had decamped to. Stravinsky had his neoclassicist period, and probably for similar reasons. Things happen in your life, and you get a sense of comfort from going back to doing things you used to do before, sometimes referred to as Stuckism, a term coined in the 1990s, where you're not necessarily stuck in the past–you're stuck in your skills, and I think that's a good place to be stuck in.

5/10/2023

When I've made visual art, I keep it in view on the periphery. This way you're always glancing at it and allows you to resolve impasses. Passing by it solves the impasses. It works the same with music: The answers will come to you and will tell you what it needs. Other people might suggest things and that can work as well, but an artist shouldn't be needy. Otherwise, you'd continually be paralyzed by the cadre of voices telling you what to do. (By the way, this works in

life as well). A practical example would be placing various timbres against each other. I've found that when I had a bass part that got buried in the mix, another part pulled it out.

5/10/2024

The downside of the Songday routine is that they produce earworms I might not want. Today, reading Keith Haring's 5/10 entry, I have a "dorm apartment" earworm.

Steve Albini: "I've lived my whole life without having goals, and I think that's very valuable, because then I never am in a state of anxiety or dissatisfaction. I never feel I haven't achieved something. I never feel there is something yet to be accomplished. I feel like goals are quite counterproductive. They give you a target, and until the moment you reach that target, you are stressed and unsatisfied, and at the moment you reach that specific target you are aimless and have lost the lodestar of your existence. I've always tried to see everything as a process. I want to do things in a certain way that I can be proud of that is sustainable and is fair and equitable to everybody that I interact with. If I can do that, then that's a success, and success means that I get to do it again tomorrow."

I agree with this in spirit, but not in reality. This is an example of perhaps being too much in the right hemisphere. You should have goals, but allow yourself to move the goalposts. I experience this with every project where there can be lots of brainstorming and experiments, but then you have to go into goal mode, but it's not fixed, and neither is the size of the field. The campus protests are another example of weighing breaking the rules or adhering to them. I think you can find a mid-point, or you have to.

5/10/2025

It's interesting now with AI-generated music that there are no influences that we could ever know because it's all anonymous. Musicians always learned through imitation at some point, but with AI artists, they might be asked in the future who their influences were and they will have no answer–or it might be anything except music.

Trail walk, Greene Forest Preserves, Darien. I'm still of the opinion that urban environments are photographically more interesting than natural environments, particularly in areas where there are no unique features, such as rock formations and so on. If you're walking through the prairie, even at any time of the year, they look the same every year, and there are no unique features that stick out to the photographer. Cities are so much more interesting because there are more geometrical forms and shadows.

May 11ths

5/11/2022

Why do we still believe in magic when we know the facts?

I was thinking this morning about mystery and magic, specifically in music. People tend to want to hold on to things that are mysterious and magical even when they know all the information about something. They might have studied it a long time but they still go with the magic. People might be a fan of certain instrumentalists and they know their entire history but they always hang on to that certain mystery or atmosphere of the personality. When I was learning music I had my heroes and there were the usual ones: in the 1970s and 1980s they were John Entwistle, Geddy Lee, Chris Squire, and I loved their sound at the time. It's not hard to get that sound and is no longer a mystery. It's just an electrical signal chain electromagnetic that results in different timbres and can be manipulated on the instrument, as well as with the amp and effects. Players find a sound that becomes their signature sound, and everybody wants that sound, so they tend to focus on that rather than on the music. They tend to look past a lot of the things that are perhaps sub-optimal. Chris Squire's sound was really too bright and growly to my liking. Sometimes it would just sound too clanky and it didn't really support the music so much. It wasn't until he started to write his own music that you realized how good of a songwriter he was. So there was another aspect of it besides the usual mystery and magic. I tend to like mystery and magic as well, but once I've learned something, I tend to not focus on the magic so much. I know that it can be produced in the moment and that's the best kind of magic rather than the one that we religiously follow. #riff

5/11/2023

Millennials either leaving or not even entering the workforce is evidence that neoliberalism is ending. It is a new Morning In 'Murica. Reagan's can-do turned into won't-do because it's turned up to be an empty sound byte. They want to get out of bed on their own terms, otherwise they can't get out of bed. Thanks Ronny for your absolute film-actor phoniness cum phony president.

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It's been interesting to watch the cover songs of Gordon Lightfoot. One of them was by Billy Joel of *Sundown.* I hate to say it but the covers of Lightfoot don't do justice to the originals. What might be happening is that the recording itself makes the song. Some people intimately identify with recordings, which is one of the primary reasons that people like to hear cover music as close to the recording as possible. It's the recording that echoes in our heads, not the song itself being performed with just the voice and accompaniment. It's the emotion in the sounds draped around the musical framework of the song. Personally, I like radical re-arrangements and interpretations of music that express the core of the music, but even then, the songwriters might see it as inappropriate because they were there with the muse when they got the idea.

What's interesting about the evolution of ideas into recorded versions is that it is kind of a "confabulation", not unlike the re-telling of a dream, where you have some small fragments that get spun out over time, with one recording becoming its only manifestation—which is the one that gets covered—when in fact, if the artist re-recorded it, it might be something completely different. I like making different versions of new songs to see what they might be capable of

and they can be vastly different from the original idea—like 10cc's *I'm Not In Love*, which originally had a bossa nova feel, then became a huge studio production, and is the one that plays in our heads. The song is good enough to be played with just an acoustic guitar or piano, but it seems odd given that the "big boys don't cry" bit is a sonic artifact that has no real musical equivalent. If you were to arrange that bit for a small ensemble, how would you do it? Does the vocalist, who might be a male, whisper the lyric, or is it "scored" and played by an instrument?

There was another cover (not Lightfoot) that I watched recently, which was Harry Styles' cover of Joni Mitchell's *Big Yellow Taxi.* Musically it seemed off-kilter because her music is so personal based on her unique guitar technique arising from alternate tunings, in combination with unique phrasing which can't be easily covered. But his cover of Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* is even better than Gabriel's because it captures its youth.

What's going to be interesting over the next decade is that guys like Billy Joel are going to be passing away and people will be covering him. It might also be the case where popular covers will be covered as a double-cover, and possibly deepfaked which will be the new kind of "Cover". #riff

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I think we're moving in the wrong direction with artificial intelligence when used in art-making. We've been doing automated art for a very long time as a manifestation of postmodernism. More and more I feel we're moving towards metamodernism, a neo-postmodernism or post-postmodernism. I think people are starting to get the idea that this is probably the end of postmodernism because we're all getting sick of "anything goes". Of course that comes from

Dada 100 years ago, but even then, most artists were still great craftsmen, but there's not much craft around anymore. Automation allows us to make more crap and be taken seriously for it. It's a "groupy" thing—everybody's doing it. One could make the argument that even rock 'n' roll is a groupy thing (literally it was a groupie thing). Everybody wants to do the most popular thing—they want to feel a part of the crowd—they don't want to be an outsider. But it's ironic that being a rocker is precisely about being an outsider, a group of Outsiders. When you're a lone Outsider then that's different. That's when you can do your best work because you're not being needy as an artist ("What do you think of this piece?", "Should I do this, should I do that...") Just do it! It might be your last day on Earth and why are you waiting for people to give you approval? I think what would be most indicated for today's society is to move towards a new Renaissance where people would spend a lot of time honing their craft and making it the best they could—make the best paintings, make the best music. Of course we can still do postmodernist work. People have been clever throughout history and did wacky things but it was counterbalanced by craft. In metamodernism we can have everything—we can do it all, balancing the more rigorous with conceptual work or things that are ideas-based. An example in music is alternating between the 4 Levels. #riff

5/11/2024

Interesting: The Book of Hours, a devotional text with prayers and Latin for various times of the day, along with a yearly calendar of religious dates and other texts to encourage devoutness and reflection. The Spinola Hours integrated text and pictures with illusionistic effects.

5/11/2025

When I've attempted to re-create AI music sometimes there's not much there, or it's impossible to play or sing them at the same tempo, particularly the guitar parts. Usually the chord changes are uninteresting when played on a real guitar. When Bowie's Outside album came out in 1995 I was wondering how they'd re-produce it live, and they actually did and it worked. The songs themselves have to be good enough to play them on a guitar. Electronic improvisations don't rearrange well, as AI music doesn't. If you keep translating them back and forth between "languages" the meaning changes.

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When you "own" something, you compare your current activities with the ideal ones that you want to have. But at the same time, you can box yourself in and create a permanent "tattoo" or permanent "uniform" for your identity. At some level, this is important for self-identity, but it will prevent you from exploring other parts of yourself that are just as natural. You may start to wear red hats because everyone you self-identify with is wearing them. It's easy to own something if it's free. Once there's a "fee" will you want to sink the cost?

May 12ths

5/12/2021

More on the book *Music Lessons* by Boulez: There's a section in here that relates to the idea that we tend to reduce things to a limited number of sounds. As I've said before, some people just look at the margins–they look at the frame but not the art, they listen to the snare sound or the bass sound–they focus in on what the drummer is doing but they're not really listening to the piece as a whole–they're not listening to the lyrics, they're paying attention to one isolated element. It's a fixture of music listening that we tend to focus on just one thing, especially in pop music, but not so much in classical music–at least for the listener. Conductors of course are critical in shaping certain isolated elements in instrument groups, such as bringing a dynamic level down in the brass section. Purity of sound in the pop world is the purity of the snare sound or the guitar sounds. We tend to box ourselves into those kinds of things–we don't zoom out to experience the piece of music as a whole. The way I experience music as a whole is to play it acoustically, because if it works acoustically then you can do whatever you want with it. From a composer standpoint that's what I like. But listeners, and viewers of art, look at different things than the artist.

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(There's some noise coming out from outside–it's kind of an interesting sound. It's been going on for a couple of hours now. It sounds like a band saw or a circular saw going through some metal. I probably should record some of it). I was thinking about the evolution of ambient and film music and how it grew out of the traditional mode of scoring for film, working with traditional instruments and orchestras.

Over time it became somewhat easier because you could use synthesizers and sequencers and other new technologies that were coming out beginning in the late 1960s, then really taking off in the 1980s when MIDI came out. My first synth, which I bought in 1983 had MIDI on it. It was one of the first MIDI Rolands, the Juno 106. Now it's evolved to AI using cybernetics or simply using algorithms to associate one thing with another, so you might have a neural network or machine learning running in the background and it's just looking at the luminance values in a film, or looking at the pace of the cuts, for example. The way I would see its application is to use it to do a first pass and work out the cues and then start using synthesizers. Once you're in MIDI you can always reduce that to notation.

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Just as we have the concept of eye trace in user interface design where we can look at where the eye is focused, we can do that with where the ear is focused–"ear trace". The same thing is happening. The default for the eye on a computer screen is somewhere in the upper left, but there may be some other things on the screen that will change the eye trace. The same thing happens in music and sound as well. Ear trace in classical music has to do with how the conductor and the musicians are listening together. Similarly for the ambient artist, or the just the individual artist who's recording and mixing music it's the same process. They're in all of those roles–the conductor, the composer, the player–and it's very difficult to balance over a longer period of time. As with eye trace, you get eye fatigue and with ear trace you get ear fatigue. What I find useful in doing mixes is to put it away for a couple of hours and then start the mixing process from the beginning. Immediately you hear things you didn't before, but that tends to fade over time. You get ear fatigue. If you keep playing things over and over again, you're going

to miss things. So it's good to take those breaks. And same thing is happening when we're looking at screens all day. If you open up your computer in the morning and you look at the screen, no matter the nature of the content, you're going to zoom in on what you want. But once you've been doing that all day, there's different things that you have to focus on and other things you might miss. So how the screen is designed becomes less of a factor as you get fatigued during the day. The same thing happens in music as well, both for the writer and the listener. There's really no shortcut to figuring out how to get people to pay attention to where you think the attention should be placed. Over time you become more wise of what works and what doesn't work.

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It's interesting to have watched the evolution of the New Age movement. I started getting interested in it in the mid-80s when I picked up L. Ron Hubbard's *Dianetics* on a lark at a sale at Kroch's & Brentano's, which led to other things, primarily Joseph Campbell, Paul Brunton, Robert Bly, and Carl Jung. When I look back on that period, I see how it's fractured over the years. Now we have people of different mindsets and different politics who are using the same framework of the New Age or 70s vibes. In the rock 'n' roll world, you have people like Gene Simmons, but he became a libertarian, so he's commingling a lot of the 70s culture with more right-wing views. You can see this happening in the Republican Party, who has a new cadre of politicians who are GenX or Millennial who perhaps have revisionist views of politics, all the while conflating it with their rock 'n' roll youth cultures from the late 70s into the 80s.

I see the insurrectionists as being kind of a rock 'n' roll rebellion in a lot of ways. The people who were there weren't listening to Big Band music or The Pointer Sisters. There's

a militant pull-no-punches kind of rhetoric going on, especially on social media. It no longer shocks me that some of the things that people say that you would think would be coming from upstanding politicians are basically just being Johnny Rotten.

There are two sides of the coin now, where you have people who are talking about a New Age Renaissance, like Marianne Williamson, who also comes from a rock 'n roll background, but she's a Boomer. You'll have people on the Christian right who are saying basically the same things– that there's this new renaissance coming and if we just focus our attention on this or that, then we're going to have a new golden age. It's coming from both sides, and we're saying the same things, but our objectives are different. What I see coming from the religious right is that there's a punishment that should take place, that we brought it upon ourselves, and that God will punish us. But once we get through the punishment, we'll have a new age–it will be Spring.

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I was listening to an interview on Marianne Williamson's podcast with Jean Houston, who has been around the world more or less like an anthropologist and I'm sure she's taken psychedelics. All the things that she was talking about was inspired by Terence McKenna and all those people who promote the idea of taking psychedelics. Psychedelics should probably be taken every day just as you'd have a cup of coffee in the morning you'd have some kind of a microdose or something. I think people would just settle down and would start to think cosmically. We're trying to do that collectively but there's too much noise. People are too much in their amygdala on social media.

If in fact there's a renaissance, I think those kinds of things will bring it on. Nootropic substances are sort of like B12–every person on this planet needs it or they will get lots of diseases and they will die. Substances are nutrition and there are nutritions that we get from non-food substances. You could take it a bit farther and say that culture can create "nutrition: as well. I'm always looking for the life-giving sustenance from art. Sometimes it takes a while to extract those elements from the spiritual nature of art and it makes sense that we would use nootropics.

Another thing that needs to be restored is proper sleep. Everybody complains that they have sleep problems when in fact they might not have sleep problems at all. It's an issue with biorhythms and nootropics substances could help. This goes back to the idea of cycles and patterns: you can take some planet or moon somewhere that doesn't have a sustainable cycle of seasons that could promote life as we know it but there's still some pattern there, even if a planet is wobbling, that over hundreds and hundreds of revolutions around a star could show some kind of a pattern over time. We're not seeing the long view. If we go to Europa, which is supposed to have an ocean under its ice crust, there's a pattern there and you could drill down to examine them. So if you see that life emerged from some kind of a pattern but there's just randomness–there couldn't possibly be life if it's just noise and randomness. But nature itself knows its patterns and that's what makes nature nature. I see it as kind of a feedback loop, In the absence of a feedback loop there probably wouldn't be any detectable form of life. I think the pattern we're in now has to do with all this noise that's being generated off of networks, which is something we're reacting to as a civilization. We all know that the pattern we're in now is not working. Even in the attempts to find the answer there's too much noise. We see AI as the primary solution. To some degree it is useful because we never had something

like it in the past. But I think we're still experiencing a lot of noise, even from AI because of what's in the training sets–garbage in garbage out. Perhaps we should focus our attention on where the AI "utopia" is rather than allowing it to create its own dystopia.

Another interesting thing to think about is a revival of alchemy in the sense that we're taking individual elements and we're combining them to create gold. Obviously, these days it means the hoarding of it in terms of being billionaires, not because wealth is good but more of a clutching of safety in a world that has become dystopian.

There's been a tremendous amount of money that's recently been put into research into nootropics, MDMA, psilocybin and LSD and it's starting to be more accepted. There are a number of states that have decriminalized mushrooms. It's interesting how both sides of the political fence have invested in this enterprise, but our objectives are different and we're seeing a potential unity as a result. There are some very wealthy people who have invested in it, like the daughter of one of the Koch brothers, and Matt Gaetz–which is odd. I wonder what he sees in it? I'm cynical because I don't know how it's going to be used and for what ends. It won't be a hippie thing for sure. It will be about power. They might be saying, "Well we've put up all this money then we have political power over you", and perhaps file patents on everything. The conflicts that we have in the US mirror other conflicts in other areas like the Israelis and the Palestinians. If you looked at brain scans of these people you'd probably see the same things that you see brain scans of Americans these days, or in the Balkan war in the 90s. You'd probably see the same kinds of conflicts. Perhaps psychotropic substances would tame the savage beast, but of course the Nazis were tripped out on drugs.

I think it'd be perfect for music, but music is different because music already has "psychedelic" elements to it: when you're playing music, you tend to go into a different part of the brain, just for the time that you're playing music. I think it dissolves conflict but obviously there are all kinds of arts organizations, bands, and artists who can be on opposite sides of the political fence, but they're coming together to make music.

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There was a series of articles that ran in the Financial Times about the slowing of growth in China. What I found interesting was that the young people, just like in the US, want to go to the cities and have a cosmopolitan lifestyle, all driven by neoliberalism, mostly a negative thing. China's probably going through their First Turning and they're starting to get to the Second. It seems utopia has been achieved and then all of a sudden a new generation comes in and they want different things–they want modernity. Typically what comes with modernity in the 21st century is neoliberalism and they're going to hit a brick wall, just like the hippies, who became the yuppies. The yuppies are now retired and these cycles keep repeating in all cultures regardless of what their heritage is. You would think that certain cultures wouldn't have these kinds of cycles but they do because we're all in the modern world now and going through the same cycles. So China's going through their 1960s now and soon they'll get to their 1970s.

5/12/2023

Do we live in a time of avoiding triggers to remain in comfort zones? For me, it's the "tabloidiness" of everything. For a century, our psyches have been manipulated by film and

TV, but the tabloid newspaper is still screwing us up. (I'm reminded of Warhol's "Headlines" series).

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Can one truly be a musician and a Christian Nationalist? There's a part of me that they come from an entirely different place alien to music-making. Of course, anyone can play and compose music but it comes from somewhere else and makes music political which ultimately destroys the idea of unity central to music. Or not, perhaps the continuous conflict can make it interesting.

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Interesting (and funny): Karl Jenkins (from Soft Machine) was confused by what the memosphere was calling Meghan Markle in disguise at the coronation wearing a wig and a fake mustache.

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On Quora someone asked, "If Putin dies today will the war In Ukraine end?". That's such an interesting question because the answer is clearly, no. Potentates are around as temporary role-players who like to think that they themselves can control how the world works. What is really at play are personal and collective archetypes and myths which go back centuries and millennia in most of the world. The US has its own unique mythologies which also draw from the ancient world, but our own archetypal history is fairly shallow compared to the rest of world history. Consider a more generic question and fill in the blanks: If _____ dies today, will _____ end?

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More Quora: "Why can't I think of new creative ideas?" It could be how our brains are wired—-or how the society at-large is wired. I think the majority of the population might have a bias for left-brained thinking and so that becomes the norm. I noticed in music the prevailing notion is that you should be covering other artists' music before you can consider creating your own. I wonder why that is, and again, it could be how society collectivizes its cultural norms. You may want to consider whether you might be "gaslighted" by these cultural ideas. In terms of how you could push back against that, make a concerted effort to be more curious and observant. For example, take photographs without using a camera, meaning "scouting" possible photos, then going back and capturing them. This will train you to be mindful of creative possibilities.

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As we know stress is a major factor and we have lived (probably always lived) in societies that created unnecessary stresses for people. I wonder if it would be wise to promote the idea of legalized microdosing with psychedelics. It would do wonders. Everyone would be "crazy" but in a chill, right-brain way.

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I've been enjoying watching clips of Peter Gabriel's tour. Love the floating gobos with light rays passing through them. Use of trumpets and French horns is a nice "chamber music" touch. Peter looks like a Chinese terracotta warrior in his "uniform". What I also realized is that the music I made back in 1995 is the music I'm still making now and may continue to make.

5/12/2024

Article in the Chronicle of Higher Education: "Is This The End of Reading?" I think it may be the end of strictly linear cover-to-cover kind of reading, to a reading that is more selective. My reading has changed over the years, where I'm looking for new bits that relate to something I already know, and then connecting them. This is combinatorial reading. The new problem now in my view is that there are fewer (nonfiction) books I find engaging enough to want to read linearly, or spend lots of time with. I know I really like a book when I'm flagging lots of pages or highlighting/copying text. I suspect this kind of grazing/scrolling comes from screen reading. Who doesn't find themselves scrolling around looking for some savory/sweet bits to satiate our hunger for new information? What you really want is the *exformation*—the takeaways. Life is like that as well, and I never understood why films have to be linear and about something. (You can do things out of order. We think that things should proceed linearly (and they should from an engineering perspective, but in other things, you can rearrange the sequence until it has the ultimate shape you want, then make the drawing as if it was the seed idea. It's the "GMO" of creativity.)

This relates to a culinary metaphor from an article about Japanese culinary customs. What you want is to graze around in a small region at first then extend out, perhaps leaving some breadcrumbs: "I would mostly eat them sequentially—start the soup, finish the soup; start the salad, finish the salad; start the pasta, finish the pasta. "In Japan, this is regarded as really weird," he said. "It's a rude way of eating." A meal like this should be eaten in a triangle shape. "First, drink the soup a little bit, then go to the side dish—one bite. Then try the rice, for one bite. Then the mackerel—again, a single mouthful. Then go back and have another taste of the soup," he said. "This is also the key to keep you healthy ...

Keeping the balance, so you don't eat too much." I noticed this as well in the Big Chef videos where they would have tea and sweets before the meal. When I was growing up, my mother would serve the salad last as the "dessert". (Also, the "Out Of Order" essay)

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Interesting: Creativity using the cooking/food preparation metaphor. It's the angle of the approach that makes a profound difference in the outcome. For songs, as I've noticed now with the Songdays, is that the words drive everything. But when you start with music only, it's the opposite result. I think the latter is less economical and creates lots of waste (weight) which you try to scrape away to reveal the signal. "Western cooking is primarily about "adding." To make food tasty, you add butter, lemon, herbs, sauces, all sorts of chemicals. "But the Japanese style is totally the opposite." It's "a minus cuisine." It is about drawing out the innate flavor, "not to add anything extra," he said. The whole point is to try "to make as much as possible of the ingredients' natural taste." To Japanese cooks, less is more." Using language, all you need are a few words as "the innate flavor", without having to wade through heaps of content to locate the umami bits.

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A possible schema for mapping syllables to notation, where 4 is whole note, 3 is a dotted half, 2 is a half, 1.5 is a dotted quarter, 1 is a quarter, .5 is an eighth, .75 is a dotted eighth and .25 is a sixteenth. Rests and ties would be assigned another character. (This probably already exists but I'm not aware).

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Interesting: There's now a portal between Dublin and New York. This is the "telepresence" that Roy Ascott was talking about over 30 years ago.

5/12/2025

I made only one painting since 2020, a paint-over of a work from 2012. I'm still anti-object which is why I prefer scoring music and creating digital art. Physical art has to hold meaning long enough for it to remain relevant enough to hang on a wall for years. Physical art is also visible to fewer people in its entirety: If a work is in a private collection there may only be a photograph of it that the public sees, whereas audio recordings are a kind of digital photograph that can still have a negative (score) and can be "reconstituted". I'm not against making art, but it's an object that has to be stored if not otherwise displayed. Music manuscripts create whole libraries but now many of them are digitized. If you have a PDF of everything, at least you have that. MIDI and XML are more archival if they are on servers that will be maintained over centuries.

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One of the most absurd things that modernity creates is the idea that we're going to eat and sleep just to do a job. One can be very good at their job if they're well-rested and well-fed, and every day have the feeling that they're doing something meaningful, as they do the most meaningless things. No one can function that way over the long term, so it's just an absurd idea that our current world continues to be based on this. But it is true that if you had your own plot of land that you had to farm in order to feed yourself, you'd be totally exhausted after tending to that, as well as preparing the food, and cleaning up afterwards. I think this is where the problem is arising in today's world: Conservatives think that

everyone is a self-reliant hunter-gatherer, but there couldn't be anything more absurdly hypocritical, with many making $100,000 an hour or more and doing no real work as others are doing.

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Prediction: To the extent AI music generators are using the same data sets, within 5 years, you'll be able to play two or three songs together, and it will (sorta) work. Mashups will be made by AI as well. There will be playlists and radio stations with DJs devoted to this. That's not uninteresting.

May 13ths

5/13/2021

Everything in America is now baked in the cake. Things probably get baked in the cake after several hundred years, but can happen in less than a century. Once baked you can't bake them out–like the whole idea of rock 'n' roll and blues and African influences–that's all baked in the cakes of many generations now. So there can never be any real cultural revolution because there are so many things that are embedded in culture that you can't remove them. Once a culture gets embedded with itself it can't make a complete Revolution. People who grew up as rock 'n' rollers turning into conservatives and libertarians are essentially in name only. Historically, they're essentially liberals who grew up in the 60s and 70s with the same culture. It's not like that's not baked in the cake.

5/13/2024

I used to look forward to reading the New York Times every day, and now it's plastered with crap I don't want to see. But it's plastered over everything you look at these days. Why would I want to follow [him]?

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When I think about AI now in comparison to music technologies in the mid and late 80s, I see it as being provisional and experimental, and interesting in that way. When I got my first cassette 4-track in 1988 it was basically a way to experiment. In 2024 I think it's still in that phase. People who are using it now are how I used it in the late 80s with my new 4-track, such as turning the tape over, using different

tape speeds, recording found objects and sounds. It was all about experimentation, yet in the flow of other more "serious" things, or where the experiments turned into something traditionally usable.

If ChatGPT and LLMs existed in 1988 people would be experimenting as they would with tape, and would be very popular and everyone would be making mixtapes and sharing them around. There would be millions and millions of cassette tapes and it would be overwhelming—huge mountains of cassettes of people experimenting with the new technology. It's a good thing that the mountains are now digital.

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It's astonishing on how much the AI scene has changed in only 1 year. Back in 2015 when one of the first AI-generated tracks was released, *Daddy's Car* with its warbly vibe, I thought it was like the DIY cassette era, but it went beyond that–in a bad way. AI-generation is not a tinkering as it was in 1988–it's making fully-produced music for your own radio station. It's interesting in a different way, but not experimental at all. The process is more getting an idea to fit within particular categories or "programs".

5/13/2025

Just as I predicted--the dictatorship is now full on with kidnappings, beginning with Ras Baraka, next probably Governors, including JD Pritzker of Illinois. One would hope that it doesn't follow the usual authoritarian playbooks of Stalin, Pinochet, with people tied to railroad ties and dropped from helicopters. Don't ever think the wolf has left the psyche. Western democracies were an illusion that went away.

AI music can't be avant-garde (yet) or even postmodernist–unless the data sets are set up to be that way, allowing for experimentation. But who's going to pay a monthly fee to be avant-garde?

May 14ths

5/14/2022

A while back I was thinking about whether computers/neural networks could determine what key a piece of music was in. This can now be done through machine learning, but I've found that the keys are often wrong. Manual analysis is required. The same would be required of emotion.

One of the MIDI controllers is velocity, which is the speed at which a note is played and results in a louder or softer volume. But we don't know the emotion behind those dynamic changes.

Another analogy would be performing MRIs and relying on a computerized analysis in order to make a diagnosis, even without at the very least a History and Physical.

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Last night I watched *Summer of Soul* and loved it. Something like that could not happen these days–300,000 black people in a park? Not that it couldn't be organized but there would likely be outbreaks of violence–even if you had half or a quarter of the people, it would still not go well. I'm also reading *The Unbroken Thread* and there are threads between those two things. There's a passage in here where he's talking about anthropologists who made a trip to Africa in the 70s and when they came back after watching all the rituals there, they joined the Catholic church–a religion also full of ritual. Subsequently, they began trying out various Christian services: one Sunday they would attend a Quaker gathering, the following Sunday a Unitarian service, a working-class Catholic parish in the south of England, and so on. It's really

interesting that the sense of ritual is a human universal and is expressed differently in different cultures. In white Catholic churches they have hymns but they don't have drums. I wonder if you can really get the spiritual energy without singing out loud and clapping your hands and playing in a band. In the film, it was so cool to see bands like the Staple Singers, Sly and the Family Stone–and particularly the bass players.

If you want music to be spiritual you have to get inside the music and out of your amygdala. Someone in the film said that it's a kind of psychiatric therapy. People who can't afford psychiatric therapy go to church to sing and play. Religious rituals have a function but they don't have to be an organized religion.

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What does music have anything to do with anything anymore? Musicians are expected to take on a certain persona, which started with MTV 40 years ago, where how you looked was more important than the music itself. Take it back another 50 years when composers were sitting in front of a piano putting notes on a score: image didn't matter--what mattered was skill and the musical armatures that allowed that piece to be played and performed by skilled musicians. It was something that most people aspired to. It was a part of what was defined as a good life, including the kids taking piano lessons or music lessons. I'm reminded of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio where the piano was installed in a wall and over a staircase behind it. It was literally a fixture of the home. Music itself was a fixture of society and wasn't just ostentatious. It was a virtue to be able to play music or participate in any of the arts. All of this got distorted in the 80s with MTV. By the time we got to the 2000s it was distorted even more. It was a post-Napster

world where even the recording didn't matter because you could get it for free and consequently made it more unserious. The arts have been decimated by the internet and I wonder if we can ever recover it. I never let it go because I think there's a real spiritual power in music. I think it's going to be reclaimed at some point. People will see the value of it again. The brain has an ancient wiring for music.

5/14/2023

Watched documentary on the Velvet Underground. Later in the evening I talked with a friend and I said something like: "Zillennials probably don't know what the avant-garde is, so they can't have their own, so The Velvet was a singular event." As much as I like repeats of cultural history, something like the 60s could never happen again. Culture is already in the second generation of Remix, so all the remixing gets added the culture "smoothie". Everything is the equivalent of a glass of Soylent. Also, it was interesting to see the early years of the attraction of the camera—in a DIY sense—with Warhol pointing it at anything and everything and suggesting that it was a magical celebrity machine, which in many cases destroyed people's sense of reality—just as social media is today and YouTube videos. The Warhol videos were ultra-cool but would go nowhere on YouTube now. Who would want to sit and watch video art, that incidentally was something that was once cool in the YouTube early days. What people should realize is that there was a solid aesthetic sense, carrying over from Matisse for example, as a colorist who inspired Warhol. Now I'm unclear whether there is an aesthetic with any roots at all.

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We don't only have a culture of narcissism, we have a culture of speaking through other people. What's happening now,

especially on YouTube, are channels that create journalistic remixes as if they were music remixes. For example, I was just watching a remixed documentary using footage of an interview with Chris Hedges. What Hedges says is interesting, but who's doing the talking? Very often we don't question things when we see them—or as we saw them in the print media days: You know it's The New York Times when you pick up the paper. It's not someone else's grangerized rag. If you're going to have your own channel you'd want to write some of the content yourself; it has to be in your own voice. In a deep-fake, who's doing the talking? If it is generated by AI, and spoken with TTS that is potentially the (scraped) voices of many people. In some ways, I see this as an evolution (or devolution or metastasizing) of early social media where people would tweet quotes around for purposes of validation and solidarity.

***

I'm reminded of the Exquisite Corpse, from the original French term *cadavre exquis* (literally "exquisite cadaver"), is a method by which a collection of words or images is collectively assembled. Each collaborator adds to a composition in sequence, either by following a rule (e.g. "The adjective noun adverb verb the adjective noun." As in "The green duck sweetly sang the dreadful dirge.") or by being allowed to see only the end of what the previous person contributed." The whole internet is now grist for the Exquisite Corpse.

5/14/2024

Read interesting article on use of the word "like", "Like: A lack of confidence in language itself".[3] It's all about the rhythms in language. In pop music you can get away with

3. https://hedgehogreview.com/issues/missing-character/articles/like

nonsense grunting because it's more about the rhythmic or percussive quality in the words. But "like" isn't that musical of a word because the "L" is too soft, unlike the "F" word which is very percussive. If you wanted to make those words musical, the way I would do it is something "like", Um, and I was like...

Rahul Jandial: "We sleep because we must dream". The awake and dream patterns are almost identical. The analogy is that the planets and stars are always there.

***

I've been enjoying the Quiet Room more and more at the library. I get so much reading and thinking done there. It's usually packed with students. It's an introvert's sanctuary. Currently reading *The Art Of Work.* What was really interesting to me was "Miss Gleason in 39 Stages", showing how a painting evolved in a process of adding and removing. This reminds me of what I go through with some songs, and in the end I might not like the result. If you're going to do 39 versions it means it's time to move on to the next piece.

Studio: Working on some of the *Drop 31* pieces. I have to catch myself getting too much into the machinery of music and think about the meaning.

[5/14/2025: It's interesting and ironic that AI music can give me this control, even if it's still a form of machinery. You're disabused of exacting performances in a recording, but if you don't do those kinds of things they will go to seed].

5/14/2025

When I read through Keith Haring's entries I'm amazed at his ability to be pop. But the work is not that great in my view. I seem to be incapable of doing popular things. Perhaps the universe knows I've never been a follower. Haring was also tapped into the universe, with a very different result in his work and life. People want simple stupid feel-good stuff--flowers and sunsets, pets.

***

If you ask most people why they do what they do and why they behave the way they behave, they wouldn't be able to tell you accurately. They would kind of stumble around and make generalizations about who they think they are. I think we're always changing as people, but creative people have a deeper root (route) to their personality and behavior. Since everybody else is changing throughout their lives, they expect other people to change along with them. But we're all taking different routes, but I like that I have routes (roots) and I always return to them. Some people think this is childlike behavior and that you're not grown up yet, but I think people are trying too hard to grow up. This is one of the reasons we need creativity as an individual activity, because it helps you define yourself and better articulate what makes you tick. Very often, we'll see people changing, and we don't know why, and if you ask them, they wouldn't know why either. They're just changing, but they see themselves as being the same as they always were, but others on the outside are seeing something different because they've shifted their position. There's nothing wrong with that as long as you can explain why you do the things you do. A good corollary in music is how I play instruments, especially the bass. It seems like I'm always changing my approach--whereas some players have played the same way their entire life.

***

I still can't understand how Trump can make a Duchenne smile. He must truly believe he's a good person and there's no inner conflict or cognitive dissonance. This must be what people pick up on. But it's a battle of cognitive dissonance. An equal number of people think he's the most patently felonious person who ever existed.

May 15ths

5/15/2022

Reading Man Ray's writings on art. What I like about books of correspondence is to marvel at how much people wrote to each other—in long-form, not just in little text messages.

It's also interesting to read vis-a-vis the recent multi-million dollar sale of "Le Violon d'Ingres", the most expensive photograph ever to sell at auction.

Cherry-picked takeaways: He thought painting was dead but still did it "to convince himself of its inanity". "Painting is dead, finished"; You will perish if you are not abreast of [the latest art developments]. The tricks of today are the truths of tomorrow."

5/15/2023

Many experiences in life are now "shorts", i.e. not wanting to go too far with anything for fear of being triggered by something unsavory, so we train our eyes to gloss over them. Idea: video installation with videos of people opening books to random spreads, with a hand pointing at a sentence or phrase, then abruptly smacking the book closed in anger with a loud smack.

5/15/2024

If music came before language, then it's the music in the language that came first, perhaps in the form of onomatopoeia. Westernized language is mostly non-musical because it's prose, but there can be a musicality within it. Both have to do with elocution, which can be rhythmic in nature, and

make the initial riff ideas. But you can have a riff idea and map words over it. It has to do with selection: selecting music to fit words, or selecting words to fit the music.

***

The perfect word for the current state of AI is "bathetic". A few days ago some guy was giving a TED pitch for a vision of the internet that will be more like having a one-on-one conversation with it. I couldn't stand watching it. What is it that people are trying to do with this energy hog? It's still "yesterday's tomorrows" to me.

When I think about AI now in comparison to music technologies in the mid and late 80s, I see it as being provisional and experimental, and interesting in that way. When I got my first cassette 4-track in 1988 it was basically a way to experiment. In 2024 I think it's still in that phase. People who are using it now are how I used it in the late 80s with my new 4-track, such as turning the tape over, using different tape speeds, recording found objects and sounds. It was all about experimentation, yet in the flow of other more "serious" things, or where the experiments turned into something traditionally usable.

If LLMs existed in 1988 people would be experimenting as they would with tape, and would be very popular and everyone would be making mixtapes and sharing them around. There would be millions and millions of cassette tapes and it would be overwhelming—huge mountains of cassettes of people experimenting with the new technology. It's a good thing that the mountains are now digital.

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I kind of like the new red portrait of King Charles. Red is a "trigger" color, always saturated—both as an effective accent color, as used in painting for millennia, and saturated with semiotics from myriad cultures, all meaning different things.

5/15/2025

So much of the early web was saturated with all the potentialities for collaboration in the arts. The beginning of any new technology is all "blue-sky", then you realize that "weather" exists. Napster was the "storm" that rolled in. The internet is now the music instrument replacing the recording studio as an instrument, just as the internet is now the new TV. Also, it's astonishing how Youtube has come. But 2012 was its inflection point where it truly became (ad supported) TV with the use of algorithms. The big wish in the beginning of the web was streaming video. It was already using the film metaphor with elaborate Flash intro pages that were like opening sequences in films.

If AI-generated music was set up so you'd see the artists whose samples are in the data set, you'd have to pay dearly for them. Would you pay $25 to generate a song with a guitar riff by David Gilmour? Many people probably would. Or there will be different tiers--generate a song using unknown samples: 0.005 BTC. And those songs will be churned by influencers. After algorithms, how could it be any different? This is where it's going I think if the industry (machine) prevails. It will also create other Napsters (and countercultures).

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Apparently, James Rondeau, the director at the Art Institute disrobed on a flight to Munich back in April while drunk (performance art?). He's been at the helm for quite a while.

My question is why he's paid a $1M annual salary when ticket prices are through the roof. Who just loses their shit when you're paid that much? Imagine Alfred Barr or Kirk Varnedoe spontaneously stripping and streaking. This is a good art bedfellow story with Pollack's pissing in a fireplace. Shared war stories at smoky bars.

***

I love sunset thunderstorms with the golden sun refracting off the clouds creating an "orangey sky" with pastel blues and purples, flashes of lightning within them, distant thunder. You could be on another planet. No wonder aliens want to come here on their summer vacations.

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Played around with TikTok's new AI feature. Oh my, I felt my IQ drop as if the cabin of my mind rapidly decompressed and the oxygen masks dropped. May Day!! I used one of my existing self-portraits I look like a hard guy saying something which I cannot make out. It's also not my lips or teeth.

May 16ths

5/16/2021

Artificial intelligence might turn out to be a supernatural phenomenon and it's already started. It relates to my idea about "ancient AI"--that even in civilizations thousands of years ago there were new paradigmatic shifts because of new inventions, and people started to live and behave differently than they had before. It created a psychic shift.

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On art direction: Take for example the Roman period–there had to have been some kind of art direction but they weren't called art directors. There was probably someone at the top level directing how the art was made and then you had the artisans making the intricate patterns. It wasn't individualistic at all, although the art director had to have some individual artistic practice but he was under the thumb of a potentate or leaders at the top level (the "art generals"). He'd make the mock-ups then show them to the government, they would approve it and then he would get the artisans together to make the work. It's in stark contrast to individualistic societies that are all art directors. Every artist is an art director; they're able to do whatever they want. That's the period that we're in but I wonder if that's going to change? I wonder if we're going to go back to artists and artisans?

5/16/2022

Last night was a total lunar eclipse and I was watching it from the front seat of my couch because it faces east and I could see it up in the sky. Just when it reached full eclipse, the clouds rolled in and thought I would miss it. But I was

also watching live on YouTube. Interesting that it's the result of the canceling of blue light, resulting in red or orange light. What's being projected is the sunset and the sunrise across the edge of the globe. YouTube was also a projection: people projecting what they were seeing through their telescopes onto the internet. So you're looking through the internet like a telescope. There are people who look at lunar eclipses in different ways–through astrology and so on, so there's an emotional and supernatural component to it as well. But what stood out for me was that a lunar eclipse is a projection of sunrises and sunsets.

5/16/2023

Re-reading parts of *Conspiracy* book: I particularly liked the passage re: lines of demarcation, or the demarcation problem: what are the boundaries of "going along", and to what degree is it [defensible]? More thoughts: Fear causes conspiracies usually, and it can be on the left as well. Anything that's hyperbolic by nature and is stoked by fear will make people hysterical and strange because it releases cortisol in the brain, as well as oxytocin when cynicism is shared, and serotonin when people think they are "winning". It all comes down to brain chemicals. If one were to take drugs to control brain chemicals, people wouldn't care less about this kind of thing. They'd be "vegged". JFK conspiracies still fuel the radical-right in the same ways that they fueled conspiracies even before he was born. People are just wired this way, so drugs (and psychedelics) might be the way to go, and I believe some people are going! There's also the fear or suspicion that something is "faked", like the moon landing. People tend to reflexively respond to many things as being fake (A low line of demarcation: "Conspiracists have a demarcation line on their own personal version of the conspiracy spectrum. We all have our lines, and our perception of the claims on the more extreme side of the lines is that it's

just false information. We might disagree about the reasons for that false information existing, but we all think the stuff on the extreme side of the line is wrong.") Once you start a routine, many things are possible fakeries. Like back in March when I made the video for *Dark Side Of the Mars*, and one of the comments was "fake" (There are no dark sides of planets per se), but that person didn't seem to understand that it was a pun on *Dark Side of the Moon* for its 50th. Conspiracy theories cause people to jump to conclusions, then they're burdened with the sunk cost of defending them without the possibility of just admitting they were wrong. (Fear of embarrassment)

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It seems like more and more people are technically challenged on computers. Very ironic when you can't navigate through life without the endless entering of complex passwords and following through on multi-step procedures. Also, I think people are becoming illiterate (yet more literal and linear) in the process because all of life in which a computer is involved is entering the mindset of a computer, then living in it for most of the day. But when you go out into the world you don't actually see this "sphere" but it is permeating everything, including (and especially) the collective unconscious. That's why the world is going crazy. But it's not computers so much as they are still very similar to a computer circa 1995 (desktop/file/folder metaphors), but a shift happened in younger generations as seeing it more integrated into consciousness rather than something you turn on and off, and when it was off it was completely "off". But even with a TV being off circa 1968, it wasn't completely off because the content that it broadcasted the previous evening was permeating culture around the water cooler. 35,000 years ago whatever went on inside the caves permeated their days as well.

5/16/2024

Watched video about ChatGPT4-0. I'm particularly interested in the new voice features. They did a demo using the "Her" voice. I thought, "OMG they're trying to make life like the movie." Some people have fun with AI, but I have more fun making fun of it. Latency is still a big issue. (I've been ranting about this since the beginning of cloud computing over a decade ago). There's no wisdom in any of this. Yesterday, I was watching an interview with the late David Sanborn where he was talking about exactly this: Young musicians don't care about music history. I think all the "Her" stuff sucks.

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I'm confused about what young people are wanting to get from AI. I see it as a cicada plague. Mostly an annoyance. But they have to put a golden spike to their future somewhere. I don't recall reflexively wanting to put down any golden spikes.

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Observation: How people use the internet is what they become. If people use only Facebook as the internet I find it has changed their personality. I think I'm naive to think that the Fediverse is going to be a solution to human nature. In the early Web we thought it was the "brand new day".

Can you imagine suddenly not having YouTube as a nostalgia machine, or a machine for anything. Say a solar storm knocks out power for years.

5/16/2025

5/16/2004: "We forgot that we saw what was coming." (We saw the future coming and did nothing to stop it).

[In retrospect it was the Bush presidency that made the platform for the coup in the US now. But if you would have suggested that idea then it would have seemed ridiculous because the political divisions were hidden under a shared commission enemy–Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. A good analogy might be a Krakatoa that cools the planet for a decade, forcing us to not pay attention to CO2 levels (political division), Once the smoke started to clear in 2011 the coup was back on the front burner].

Compared to 20 or 25 years ago, I don't recall people always talking about the emotionality of music. We were excited about it, especially the prospect of making our own music, but I never thought about emotion like we do now. This perhaps has to do with considering valence, a new term used in music that arises from its metadata for categorizing music. Once we start labeling things, we tend to use the labels too much. When we create music, it's a very slow process of making a production, and whatever emotions are there could actually be the result of the compositing of multiple takes. Recordings are seldom done quickly, except in jazz, and jazz tends to rely on tension and release to create the sense of emotion much more than an everyday pop song.

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Video by Bruce Springsteen: Message to America: A Protest. A Prayer. A Wake-Up Call. Totally galvanizing. This is how grass roots art activism should look. I wish I could be an artist activist, but I don't have the archetype. Then

watched TED interview with Eric Schmidt about AI being underhyped--ironically as the potential for an authoritarian takeover of the US. We're being forced to adopt the metaphor that the world is controlled by a juggernaut AI that will destroy the word as we know it. It's a dystopian trope that wealthy computer nerds seem to like because they know they will survive in their bunkers. But the world has a deeper capacity for mysticism, which AI can never have--unless those things are quantified. AI is "quantum" in the physical sense but not quantum in the spiritual sense. We have quantum computers but there's still a difference in the two views of consciousness.

May 17ths

5/17/2023

I find myself typing texts in Evernote, then cutting/pasting into SMS. I know this is "cheating"—you're supposed to be following the cultural rules by doing what teenagers are now doing. I no longer feel so odd typing "thanks" (lower case) emoji1 that I don't know the real meaning of, emoji2, etc. I guess people just get the drift and you're supposed to know they love you. That's what they should call texting: "drift", or some semiotic variation like drft (it's important to omt the i). Communication now involves code, and code-switching, so "thanks", "Thanks", "THANKS!" and Thank you all need to be used appropriately with the appropriate people. It's like the word Nice! (tone words). You should be able to hear the differences between a text, an email and a proper letter. Perhaps communications in the future will be "ringtones" or "pingtone" and will have valences or "sonic emoji". We'll become more like birds, each with a distinct coded song. Twitter had the right idea, but look what happened.

***

Friendships actually rely on "Even-Steven"—a parity of worldviews and experience, so it is perhaps too Polyanna to think they can last a lifetime. My experience has been the "moving on" phenomenon, i.e. one surrounds oneself with only a few chosen people and everyone else gets cashiered to the margins. ("I no longer need your friendship"—I have my own tribe".) From the *Conspiracy* book: "Friendships are not about agreement, but about mutual respect, mutual interests..."

5/17/2024

Morning routines shift for me quite frequently. I used to do the video riffs, then Songdays, now I go through random Evernote entries and I found this one. This is exactly what's happening when I'm working on something—it's all subject to (or for) change.

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The Humanitarian Pier opens in Gaza. This is a nice gesture in the spirit of Declaration of Civil and Human Rights. But it's also a new and interesting infrastructure technology that I predict will be copied, leading up to the floating city idea vis-a-vis rising seas. Very often the military is at the forefront of innovation. But it's also a soft target for terrorism. (There's always a faction that isn't into your bright ideas). Also, it's a hotbed for claims of inequality.

5/17/2025

Annual Wright Plus tour (I'm not going--nothing that interesting). Walked over to the Home and Studio--as if I haven't thousands of times since I've lived here. Can you imagine the millions of people who have traipsed through it? It's a wonder it still stands. Walked over to the Winifred House on East Avenue. I've ridden past it many times and suspected it was a Wright but it actually is. Wright homes are more like dioramas or doll houses in some respects. They're like Thorne Rooms scaled up. Some of Wright's work I find gaudy, especially when he got too excited by a style and he put it everywhere--like the Mayan influence--never liked it much--but the prairie style stuff is perfection. This year seems to be mostly miscellaneous stuff, but architecturally interesting in their own right--and not being Wrights. They were all adequate architects. It's interesting that there's no Louis Sullivan

work in Oak Park. The boss isn't going to compete on the employee's turf.

***

The web zeitgeist back in 2000 was similar to what we're now experiencing with AI-everything. Back then it's all people talked about and wanted to get in on the action. I eagerly volunteered to design my company's website and we set up an "august" committee to discuss the design. At that time there was no such thing as a "web design company"--or people were first hanging out shingles, as I was. As we know it evolved rapidly with the iPhone in 2007. 5 years from now there will be another major extension that will change AI, and in a bad way. We might as well admit it. Expectations should always be lowered when it involves the masses and technology. The beginning of the internet was all about how fun and exciting it was to be at the edge, which is where we are now.

Art evolves when people reach their 20s and they awaken to the fact that the world might have some bad stuff in it. At age 30 you get it. All the kids having fun on social media apps will hit the wall at some point and some will make powerful art.

May 18ths

5/18/2021

All music exists in a form in which ideally we should be able to react to. According to McLuhan this would be a cool technology and music certainly is. I was just perusing some new AI apps for making (or generating) music. The first test for me is to just listen to the music that's being generated and I'm never impressed. You should be able to interact with it within 30 seconds. You should be able to say to yourself, "I like this–this is something that I would want to do–this is something that I would spend time on". But I haven't seen it. It's important to be able to play along with it because that's how I started: I would listen to the radio and play along with the songs. With this stuff there's nothing to learn. It's ironic because it's a machine learning–you're letting the machine play along with the records.

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I'm really not into the idea of "woundology". There are a glut of books, podcasts, and all kinds of other media about this–by Oprah and all the people she consorts with: the various experts, the psychiatrists talking about childhood trauma, and so on.

The only way you're going to change brain wiring, even if it's temporary, what you want to focus on is what are the sets of beliefs that you have about yourself? What a nation can do is provide the context. It has to support various kinds of treatments or ways of looking at the world that promote calmness and resilience in the face of triggering events.

There is an underlying top-down psychological structure where the prevailing ideologies more or less will determine what's going to happen. So if you live in a neoliberal society–which most of us do now–that's going to determine how successful you're going to be because in those situations you have to go along with the program. You don't have much wiggle room. How successful you are depends on how much "trickle-down" you get if you follow the prescribed paths of neoliberalism. Say, for example, you work in the defense industry which started to flourish under Reagan. If you voted for Reagan you probably would have done better in life and you might be able to retire at 55. But if you voted for Bill Clinton you'd have a different path in your life–perhaps not as successful as if you had voted for Reagan. Political affiliations really do matter in the long run, as well as family and community affiliations. The combination of them is really what matters.

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Very often with creative endeavors we just want to jump in and do it and I think that's actually the best way. However, at some point on the creative path you have to do a little bit of research. It's curiosity that's going to lead you to that point. If you're not curious about anything beyond what you're doing, then you're never going to get to the point where you're going to discover anything new. Your work will exist in a vacuum. From my perspective, when I look back on all the creative things that I've done in my life, it's always been shaped by things that I learned subsequently. One of the exercises that I used to give to some of my music students was to open a music dictionary at random and start to investigate one of the items on the page. This is something that I made myself do a long time ago. I think it's a good way to branch out and start to be more curious, which

transforms the work going forward. What you want is to co-evolve with the work.

***

What we have to realize about climate change is that it's going to cut across many generations in the future. Whatever plan we have in this generation it's going to have to carry over fairly easily into the younger generations. It would be similar to having a plan for communicating with another planet light years away. Communications can take years or perhaps decades to go back and forth, so you have to have some kind of plan that's going to follow through into the future, and it can't be changed very much. They will have to have the same objectives, and if it's based on politics what will those politics be? The election cycles are so short now that any policy made within a certain administration is always going to be changing. So whatever money that they put into climate change, one administration might be stopped for eight or 16 years. The pattern that one administration sets will have to stay in place.

5/18/2022

The arts are interesting because there's the part that's above the surface and the part that's below the surface. In music what's below the surface is all the music theory and above the surface is all art–or the reverse. Jazz is an example of an art form that is equally above and below. Most people want to stay above water when creating art in the sense that they want it to be easy and "inside". That works for a while but if you're curious, you're going to want to do some deep sea diving and explore what's below. Usually it's pretty fascinating but it's not easy–not everybody can scuba dive especially in water that's 32 degrees.

There was a question on Quora this morning about learning rhythms, specifically for playing guitar. It takes a long time; it's not something that comes easy. The practicing and exercises are all below the surface and people typically aren't going to want to do them. They just want to do the easy things, and it has to be fun or they won't bother.

I'm partly a disciplinarian when it comes to music. Music sometimes requires work–it requires being present, including how the notes are played. It requires certain cognitive abilities to be able to do it and it's a long-durational thing–it's something that you have to be willing to put in the effort, but people are just above the surface of the water most of the time–they just want to learn some chords on ukulele. If that's not satisfying them or they get bored, then music is over, they're not going to entertain the thought of having to do rhythmic exercises. I like to go below the surface and that's fun for me too. But I'm not always below the surface. It's fun to be on the surface but I've been below it and it's pretty interesting. There's a certain amount of navigation that's required with any new skill. #riff

5/18/2023

I suppose it's okay that older people follow the cultural changes of youth, but youth, and even young adults had their lives fucked by Reagan beginning in 1981, so the foundations were already washed out 40 years ago, and everyone has had to work with terrible inputs. So why use even more terrible inputs?

5/18/2024

"Look at the order in which you do things" is one of Eno's Oblique Strategies. In music, it's easier to start with sounds because you won't have to deal with them later. The way it

used to work is that writers would sit in front of a piano or use a guitar, and even notate it on staff paper. Orchestrators and arrangers were the "producers" then, who gave music a sound beyond just piano and voice.

Ever since the recording studio (and the internet) became instruments, it changed the order in which a piece of music was produced. The corollary in film is to get a look for the film, then weave in some kind of a narrative. But that order seems to now be reversed: now it's all about narratives, and the look of the film is less important.

Similarly, if you make a video that includes captioned text or subtitles it puts watching before reading. (I still don't fully understand why people put English subtitles on English videos. I find myself doing it).

The order in which we do things is also changed in that text can now generate both audio and video using AI. So it's easier to start with text so you don't have to deal with sound and visuals later; the text automatically does that. But it's the ideas (not from text) that are now missing from generated art, but you can add those later as well, just as you would add a narrative to a film that was all eye candy. It's like making the architectural plans for a house you already built.

Other strategies:

Do the last thing first
Reverse

5/18/2025

When the Oprah Show ended in May 2011 I was wondering whether 5 year olds would have a direct memory of her: "In 2025 people will be clueless: Oprah?! Who was he?" Most definitely not true, although some young people might not have yet heard of Paul McCartney–or have seen the name but haven't heard the solo material, or confuse Beatles with Wings. What people tend to not see is the background. Perhaps people might be surprised that Oprah had a show in Chicago that ran for a decade. The internet made endless factoids possible, which isn't history per se.

***

As I was going through my diary entries this morning, I came across an entry done on May 18, 2012 about the nurse's rally at the Daley Center. I had said that it was a "smorgasbord of grievances". That's an interesting idea: smorgasbords are like a food court where we have lots of choices. The other day I was thinking about the "spiritual smorgasbord" that we have on YouTube, where you can follow all kinds of people in the new age movement, and they're all uniquely different. I was wondering if there is a human universal or universal spiritual truth that is a thread through all of them. With artificial intelligence, we can analyze them and perhaps have it create that thread to see if there's anything that's usable in your life. It's very confusing because they're all saying something different, but perhaps there's a central idea to it all, and it would be useful to analyze it to see what the themes are.

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A "casino creativity" is where you're just pulling levers or spinning wheels to "win" a piece of music. It's "panning for

gold at the expense of the soul". Now you know you've been controlled...

***

Yesterday, I created a piece of art that didn't involve the internet, social media, or AI. Felt nice to do something arty. The cure for nerdiness is the avant-garde, which is cooler. It's important to gauge how we feel when we use, or not use, technology, and then do more of that. You're not on a hamster wheel. We can delude ourselves that hamster wheels are fixtures of life. Sadly, the avant-garde has been dying. It's not like anyone's making 'pataphysical YouTube videos or performing Schwitters' *Ursonate*

***

Why do people want dumb leaders? Answer: People don't like perceived arrogance or people who make them question their intelligence. "Stupid together" seems to have won at the detriment of the entire world. I think if you look at how other civilizations collapsed you'd find the same patterns: dictators emerge when the collective mood is to demonize people who have made them feel small for some reason. As I recall Kerry (and Hillary Clinton and Obama for that matter) had that problem. If a civilization doesn't collectively rise it just falls from the gravitational pull of people feeling collectively miserable in ways that are not clearly defined, and could be anything at any one moment, like the price of eggs, and things decline rapidly. Perceived arrogance is the bane of relationships. And the arrogant people don't go quietly either and conflicts start. We did get a smart president, but he turned out to be smarty-pants. Obama needed to give people the finger and they would have respected him more because he'd be using the rebel archetype].

***

I recently abandoned Facebook and I hope other people do. In retrospect it's an absurd history: from a teen computer nerd at the dawn of the internet to a juggernaut of civilizational destruction by selling connection at the expense of the soul.

May 19ths

5/19/2021

In 2019 I wrote a series of essays that dealt with the slippage between two terms: creativity and innovation. What prompted me to write them was that I kept seeing posts on social media about innovation and creativity spoken in the same breath, but they're not always equivalent. To be truly innovative and creative there has to be some degree of eccentricity. You have to be able to entertain strange ideas. In my experience in corporate environments they immediately push that stuff away. They don't take it seriously because it's too artsy-fartsy. A lot of these ideas just never get incorporated because people are basically afraid of them. It's the outsiderness that they don't like.

Another term that gets folded into that now is "curiosity". There's now a glut of books about curiosity. I just listened to an interview with a guy who's running a design thinking think tank and one of the core themes is "radical curiosity", which essentially is basically playing devil's advocate–you're not squelching cognitive dissonance. It's a good idea to be curious–open up that package and see what's in it instead of being afraid of it. You can call it curiosity and the cat might get killed. But curiosity doesn't necessarily have to have something to do with innovation and creativity. #riff

5/19/2022

Interesting: Retconning, revising an aspect of a fictional work retrospectively, typically by introducing a piece of new information that imposes a different interpretation on previously described events."I think fans get more upset when

characters act blatantly out of established type, or when things get retconned"

My definition of evolution in music is that which uses the past to the point where core elements are used and are reconfigured in some way. That way the initial essences are present, although they might not be recognizable. It's a manifestation of the Ship of Theseus theory where a reconstruction may or may not have the original essences and had completely evolved into a new entity, and if that gets rebuilt again it is another one, and so on.

An example in architecture is to leave just enough traditional elements so it's something we recognize as having some connection to the past, and is considered to have elegance, rather than something that is riding on the idea of having to evolve as a requirement. In music, keeping the melody and changing everything around it, tempo, harmony, rhythms, and timbre makes it seem entirely new but has evolved just enough to keep it moored to its past. Sometimes I'll isolate just the piano part in a song and record other parts against it and it's a new entity, moving from a pop song to an ambient piece.

Can there be too much evolution? I think there can be, especially in creativity where you mess around with things too much and you lose the primary essences. This is when happy accidents are useful, but they take all the wind out of the initial ideas, which may have had potential, but we reflexively feel we have to flock towards The New.

If we simply allow ourselves just to be in the flow of creativity (or life for that matter) we don't have to intervene at all. But what happens to our integrity (or the integrity inherent in ideas) if we just go with the flow and never revisit older frameworks of creativity? (also called "neo-something"-

-neo-classicism, neo-expressionism, etc.) We'll always have memories of the way it used to operate in the past, and for many they are good memories because it created satisfying results and didn't need to evolve or move on to something else. The process evolves but never at the expense of the entire form, and will retain its integrity.

[5/19/2025: I see AI as this interloper. It's "casino" creativity where a result is more of a "bet" that something will be aesthetically or conceptually satisfying. The time you spent in the casino should have been spent in the studio].Generative AI is just pulling levers or spinning wheels to "win" a piece of art or music and you come back for more. Too Much Revolution…]

5/19/2023

People are changing in ways they shouldn't be, now driven by the idea that things must go faster and faster. You could have written this in the late 19th century or even in ancient times perhaps. Time itself appears to want to go faster, something that any human in the past thousands of years would have experienced.

***

With songs, there's really no way to force anything to be great. We can attempt it but it's not up to artists to decide. That said, there are things to possibly avoid, such that you stay out of the way by being overly analytical and allow things to get into a flow state, where you can seize the moment. Also, shorten the incubation period if possible. There is some wisdom in allowing it to mature over a long period but that also creates endless tweaking. I sometimes make version after version, with each resolving some aspect, like a bad key or meter, but the song evolves rather than matures

or resolves. A good idea can very easily get lost in production as well, such as focusing on a drum sound or guitar sound. Songs based on sounds can be good songs as well, which has been the case since the 1960s, or even the 50s when the raw sound of an electric guitar made the song. To me, it's having the ability to perform it without electronics, and to reduce it to chords, melody and lyrics on a lead sheet. This doesn't mean it's great necessarily—only that it was resolved like an artwork can be resolved and finished.

I was watching some Harry Styles concerts and everyone was singing along and knew the lyrics. You could say it was a great song for 20,000 people, but it still isn't at the level of great Beatles songs. Great songs have to survive more than one generation, which is a very long time in music years. I wonder if the Styles songs will.

Also, songs can be made great and the artists didn't think they were. Then they might be forced to write more of the ones that were popular which they themselves didn't like.

I always recommend reading books on creativity, particularly the ones which cover the spiritual aspects. The idea of greatness is one of the controlling ego, which will interfere with flow in creativity.

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In culture, as things age they naturally become more "quaint", Even heavy metal from the 70s seems "quaint", as 40s culture and before seemed quaint to boomers: things were stale and old and it outlived its usefulness in terms of cultural power. I recall this happening back in the 90s when I attended a show that had Jerry Lewis jokes in it and it didn't work with the then-young GenX audience. I think what's happening these days with younger generations is

that "quaintness" can be from last month or even a few days ago. Again, it's all about the numbers: it's the first thing that people look at. It's the continuous march of postmodernist culture that is reliant on people being shocked by something. I wonder if that's going to be ending and moving on to metamodernism, which I'm very interested in. It makes nostalgia more usable, as opposed to something to avoid for the sake of The New, no matter how stupid The New is. But is metamodernism essentially a postmodern idea? I searched my library catalog for content on metamodernism and saw a country music album, *Metamodern Sounds In Country Music* (Simpson Sturgill). I thought it was kind of interesting... the idea that we can incorporate lots of other things within established genres without fear of being too eclectic, or "all over the place". Postmodernism was "anything goes" but metamodernism is "anything goes in a new way."

***

More on this idea of cognitive dissonance and aesthetic erosion: I was talking with a friend earlier and he wasn't sure what cognitive dissonance was because I had brought up the subject of the current experience of media, i.e. that you feel unmoored, you feel that things are being pushed at you and you've lost your ability to pull information as you used to from print and radio/TV media. It was "digestible"; you were able to "masticate" and "savor" the information. For example, I would read the movie reviews on Fridays and I would see the films on the weekend, in addition to those videos you could rent or get from a library. So it was a push-pull that worked efficiently. These days I wonder how the media is (insidiously) influencing my creativity because the inputs aren't the same. Back in the day, I used to frequently go to museums and galleries (several a week) and look at work properly curated on walls. Now everything is thrown

at the wall of the screen. It's a cognitive dissonance, a cultural "tinnitus" that you can't get rid of.

5/19/2024

Interesting: The "Click" generation. The first generation that instinctively knows where to click on screens, as opposed to being shown where to click. I've noticed that some boomers still don't know this. It could be that they don't care. Not caring defines the edges of one's life.

***

Reading *Yesterday, A History of Nostalgia*. The author is a Millennial I believe. They seem to like to analyze times they didn't live in and criticize how older generations use nostalgia or have written about it. For me, the 70s and 80s were a time when music simply worked. Older people can see the whole slope of decline while younger people see only the challenge of climbing the same old slope.

5/19/2025

5/19/2012: "First launch of the Falcon 9 rocket by SpaceX makes space-flight history (however with failure in the last second.) I am getting a good impression that this could be the beginning of something epochal. For several reasons: 1) Billions in private capital, 2) Spirit of adventure by risk takers, 3) the right moment in history. Now we need a formal declaration that we are going to Mars. With the advent of the privatization of space, presidents can no longer make big declarations about space programs. Kennedy cut the ribbon for the Apollo program, and now all declarations are made by guys like Elon Musk and James Cameron."

[The pre-megalomaniacal Elon Musk. This was also the moment when I thought going to Mars had some excitement in it, but it's still quixotic–something that goes hand in hand with megalomania. Little did we know that in a decade Musk would attempt to pull the rug out from under tens of millions of Americans. The formal declaration turned out to be made by a petulant rogue character, emboldened by a felonious president that should have been in prison by now. At this point in 2012 it might have been something I would have thought would be a good scene for a movie. Cameron probably ignores him at parties].

***

2011-2012 was around the time when texting started to be used more. Email was associated with work or spam. Personally, I still prefer email for the rich text capabilities and–paragraphs…I think texting has made us all more stupid, but all new forms of communication have historically. Palmer script will come back at some point when younger generations love the nostalgia look and feel.

***

As an experiment, I ran all the May 19 entries through an LLM and had it do an analysis. Interesting and funny. I don't agree with its dream analysis, as in the Titanic/Murphy Brown dream from 1998. I wouldn't be dreaming about either of those things today. The "data set" that dreams draw from are usually things that are in the daily rotations of your life or are in the background. In 1998 the Titanic film and Murphy Brown were probably being talked about.[4]

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4. https://youtu.be/1v1TIZtHHos

If you always like the work you've done, your life will always have some meaning and satisfaction: "I like how that idea evolved...". People won't share your zeal, but it doesn't matter. They weren't your muse while you were there for the period you were creating it. That goes for life in general: everyone wasn't always there when you were living it.

***

An absolutely insane juxtaposition that I realized: After 9/11 the main fears were Saudi Arabia and planes and now we have a convicted felon accepting a bribe from them in the form of an old 747. Could we have imagined connecting the dots of Donald Trump, from his comments he made about 9/11 and where we are now at this point in history? Boggles the mind.

Dinner with P. at cheap Mexican place in Forest Park. The only thing open on a Monday evening. Bland burrito--no garlic or onions. Tastes like eating chopped bagged salad wrapped in yesterday's paper. There were lots of people there so there's something that they like.

Riff: *Steely Dan Aja at 100* (See Appendix)

May 20ths

5/20/2021

On social networks now you want things to be more anonymous, which has an overall benefit. I was also thinking where or when in history have we been so concerned about social standing in our lives? You get up in the morning and you're considering your social standing, look at your social scores, see how many likes you have. When I get up in the morning I have several books that I'm reading. This is how I've always operated. I've always concentrated on the things that I think are important to me. I'm not considering whether I'm popular or not. I just enjoy the inner world and people aren't doing that these days.

***

If you are observant you can spot archetypes in everyday life. One that I've noticed over time is the jazz guitarist–the person who played in a band earlier in their life or studied jazz guitar and then they became a lawyer. They always cite their jazz guitar background as being a part of their creativity. That's interesting because people who are into jazz tend to be into things like math and things that are analytical.

***

I've been following Ron Carter's YouTube channel. I never knew that much about him and it's interesting to hear the wisdom after decades of recordings and live performances. His approach to jazz is that it's a job and he enjoys being a band leader and a manager, skills that overlap with the arts. Very often you have to wear these other hats. A jazz musician or jazz band leader could be a good corporate manager

and a corporate manager could be a good jazz musician. I think it works both ways. Skills overlap more than we think.

5/20/2023

Earlier in the day I'd been watching a documentary on the May 3, 1999 tornado in Moore Oklahoma, one of the most powerful and destructive tornadoes in history. Throughout the documentary, some meteorologists were warning people of it. People had [ample] warnings back then as well. But it depends on whether people are aware of it to begin with, especially in an area where spring tornadoes are a way of life. It doesn't matter what technology is being used: not paying attention is not paying attention. The random nature of life will affect you regardless of the primary background event, such as being killed in a car crash with a storm chaser in the process of fleeing from a tornado. What is different now is the level of fear that pervades media on continual broadcast—with notifications popping up on your phone, sometimes for events in other parts of the country. This creates "soft" red alerts for lots of people, and usually, the alerts have ads attached to them, usually unrelated or in ironic juxtaposition with the content as it has to monetize the channel.

The YouTube channel has created lots of possibilities for profitable DIY news broadcasts, with lots of it with various degrees of accuracy, sometimes completely falsified to generate hits. Selling fear is as old as the hills and is again infecting the collective unconscious—a demon-haunted world depicted in cinema: something we'd see in a movie: For example, there was a scene in a tornado documentary where a baby was blown out of her mother's arms. When the first responders went to the house, totally flattened, they heard a baby crying. When they found it, it was actually a doll that was making crying noises. I thought, "This is like the creepy world we live in now." We anthropomorphize things like

artificial intelligence and we trick ourselves into believing that if there were crying baby sounds generated by AI it was attributed to a human-like intelligence. Tornadoes themselves seem to have a life of their own and very often people will talk about them as "spooky", as if they are "spiritual" in that they decide which house to flatten over another as if it was a form of divine punishment—when in reality it is fluid dynamics, completely explainable with science by well-qualified people, alas now in a world tainted by demons, so good intentions perhaps don't matter in terms of what gets the hits and is profitable or creates good disaster porn.

***

Pete Townshend in 1981: "I can play what I think is a wonderful guitar solo and I actually feel very proud of it and you get this sort of slow hand clap at the end. But if I take the guitar and smash it on the ground it brings the house down." (Even if you feel your work has the right intentions, people may not care. People want to use you as a screen for the collective unconscious of base desires. If possible, they want to use you as their connection to celebrity and as a refuge from nobodiness, or to express things they are unable to express).

5/20/2024

Caroline Myss: "If we're down here [at the first chakra] everybody has to believe the same thing and that's a great control mechanism. If you stray from what everybody's agreed to believe everybody gets to get you." Nice Songday line/title: "Everybody gets to get you". You're part of a tribe whether you like it or not, and since the 1960s, "tribe" has been redefined. The world is currently trying to change the definition again. It will always have no one set definition.

***

When I was grocery shopping at Trader Joe's Captain Beyond "Sufficiently Breathless" was playing. It lifted my mood. I loved that band circa 1978.

5/20/2025

5/20/2003: "Congress passes Bush's tax cut. This is supposed to "defribulate" the economy, and in a way is the same thinking of the invasion of Iraq, i.e. surgically remove the "cancer" and then let it repair itself. Thomas Friedman: "The Iraqis are a broken people... and they have looted the country to the bone." The US failed to have a plan B."{

[Whether one believes in karma, the US is now experiencing it by becoming its own enemy. Tax cuts do nothing but allow people to hoard wealth as a form of certainty and security, and allow them to be cruel to the less fortunate people who deserve their fate because it's their station in life. A trope and archetype as old as the hills. At the moment I'm totally cynical. Moreover, we have a convicted felon as president. How could things be rosy?]

***

Every time I listen to the AI version of *Blood River* I laugh, considering what the original was. In 1995 I was saying that the song reminded me of Louisiana and arose from the metaphor of arteries being like rivers. This version was performed by a really good band in a smoky bar outside of Baton Rouge circa 1978. It's fun to play with AI but it's a low art. Low can be good too.

***

Another interesting analogy for AI-generated music is the old coffee machine dispenser, which had a container of the lowest quality coffee, a container of water, a container of cream, and a container of sugar, and then you would make a selection, the cup would drop, and the coffee would squirt into the cup. This is how AI music works as well, where instead of selecting the options like "black no sugar", "black no cream", you select the vibe and the instruments. This is not uninteresting to me, but no one really wants to use vending machines when there are other options. It's a last resort.

***

Watched Myss lecture. I like her. I get the greatest insights, not to mention lyric ideas. I think mysticism for artists is very helpful when you get in your 60s. You don't have youth to defend. "What matters is what's the motivation [intention] behind something, regardless of what the belief is." She was alluding to the current opposition politics around vaccines. A fact is that Republicans are born to be oppositional and to pick fights. The bullies in grade school are probably future Republicans. They are cruel by nature. It's in their aura. Line I like: "Take up your bed and walk".

May 21sts

5/21/2021

Art is always the process of squaring what we wanted to do and what we eventually did.

It's fairly rare for anyone who's creating any kind of art form that it turns out exactly the way it was envisioned. Everybody has seen a composer's score—all the scratch and scribble—as Beethoven's sketches were. Eventually the music had to be "manufactured" through the publishing process by editors and copyists. Copyists are instrumental in getting it to a published form that can get printed to parts and put in front of the musicians and then performed and recorded. There's a whole sequence of things that has to happen before there's an audience to hear it. But when you go all the way back to the beginning where the first notes were being put on manuscript paper it's a totally different world. It's the gap between the original ideas and what eventually happened and is always totally different.

***

The piece I'm working on now for *Music For Places V* is a "period piece" set in Paris in 1932 in which there are only photographic stills for possible scenes in a movie—"scouted" photos if you will.

One of the scenes is in a cafe in Paris. Possible scoring for this kind of scene is almost cliche: jazz, piano, a horn section, perhaps a Stephane Grappelli-ish violin, concertina or accordion, and so on.

Ironically, there can't be any electronic instruments. But we all work digitally these days, and the options are so seductive. Use of anachronism is an option, but has to be done correctly so it doesn't seem like an error in continuity.

Say you have an idea for a conceptual work and you're using oil on canvas. How will the ideas be expressed on a continuum so that the work satisfies the "mission statement"? You have to move forward constantly by putting paint on the canvas, but then you have to look at it and say, "How does that square with what I was thinking? And usually at the end, it's not what you were thinking. It wants to be, or has been something else. It is fairly rare that anybody that is creating any kind of art form that it turns out exactly the way it was envisioned.

Early prototypes, like concept cars, are always totally different from the production model (although that seems to be changing).

It's going to be interesting to see what happens with my Paris 1932 period piece given that it is essentially in a digital milieu, which didn't exist then. Typically what I like to do is reduce things to standard notation, so the music can be played regardless of period.

***

A couple days ago I got an email about buying a million YouTube views for $500. I imagine people have been doing that all along, so you see all these people that have a huge following and all that has been bought.

The normal condition on the internet is that people are just going about their business. They're not always following social media channels (I don't). Rick Beato's channel has three

million followers. When you think about that, it's a large city. Paul McCartney's channel has less than a million, and those are real views. I wonder if people are buying celebrity.

Democracy itself is also starting to become a game. If you're a Player in the democracy game then you can have all the trappings of democracy. If you can't even get into the game or your scores are low then you can't play the democracy game.

***

Article in Scientific American titled, "You don't have to start young to be a great musician". This goes back to the evergreen discussion about how early to start musical training. I didn't start playing an instrument until I was 17, which was typical in the Boomer and GenX generations because music and musical instruments were ubiquitous, yet unlike previous generations where instruments were "fixtures" like a piano or organ. It doesn't necessarily have to be a fixture of the family home like it used to be. Those days are long gone.

It was very common back in the early 20th century for all homes to have some kind of an instrument like a piano. It was like a refrigerator–it was always there. Music has to be ubiquitous and that's not something that we have a problem with anymore. After radio, TV, and concerts we're immersed in music, and in fact, we're always learning it even if we don't really play instruments as we used to. It's something we're absorbing from the culture as the guitar in the corner that somehow calls out to be played–as it was for me. My friends all had instruments in their homes and I was always drawn to them.

In terms of practice, of course you have to, but there's different kinds of music that don't require a lot of practice.

Some don't even involve *playing*–it's just interacting with a controller, but still producing patterned sound, so we're still within the definition of music.

What I do in my own practice is that if there's something specific that I want to do then I'll do what I call "maintenance practice", where I identify the weak areas and practice those things. It's better than trying to do an hour of stuff you've done before.

5/21/2022

Sometimes I think about the effect of the internet, now almost a generation old. The first thing I noticed was that it was making us do dumb things and we still are, albeit in a more "mature" manner. This carries on until today and I don't know why that is.

In the 2000s in the Bush administration I noticed that opinions were becoming facts and people started to interpret them that way. I also noticed that knowledge became more of a "game" where there would be some discussion going on and the feeling that it was a competition and who was going to win the argument or who was the smartest person in the room.

People won't absorb information unless it's vetted in some way. The way we do it now is by the numbers, so the first thing that people look at is how many likes and followers you have. There's more people in the room and more people in the room that clapped.

[An interesting book on this score is the book "Status Games". Also interesting is a 10/2022 talk with Jonathan Haidt, who has been in the Twitter trenches vis-a-vis cancel culture].

5/21/2023

NYT article: "Millions of Americans go to talk therapy. But does it work? It's a surprisingly difficult question to answer." My version: "Millions of Americans go to [books and videos by people in the higher consciousness movement]. But does it work? It's a surprisingly difficult question to answer." It could be that nothing is wrong with anyone. It's the bad inputs we have to contend with in modernity. The 1-Percent are the people that control the inputs. Reagan was the first real attempt to control the inputs without the input of anyone who was at the bottom trickle-down of the new neoliberalist inputs.

5/21/2024

Back in the early web it was easy to get good reviews on almost any self-released music. It was the salad days of the internet. Now it's a dystopian movie.

***

Watched old 2001 documentary on Sting. In one segment the band was rehearsing on 9/10/2001. This was the eve of the descent into hell. Some historians (Neil Howe) don't think 9/11 was the beginning of the Fourth Turning. I think we actually had 2 Fourth Turnings, and will have many more if it's actually not a change of Turnings, but changes of *Ages*, like the end of the Bronze Age. Perhaps it was the Enlightenment that gave us the idea that we could depend on cycles, with some of them rejuvenating. The Enlightenment was the rejuvenation of the doldrums of the Middle Ages.

5/21/2025

We like the story of the happy accident or fortuitous events: two people meeting in some odd circumstance and getting married, a happy accident that led to a hit song. They are the things that make for the best stories, which shift over time and people have a different understanding of them through the ages. Like the retelling of a dream, eventually it becomes a narrative, even if it was based on unrelated fragments. Stories are baked into the temporal linearity of life, but the initial sources of those stories are probably banal and don't have any meaning.

Quora: Is it better to live an honest life and be disliked or to compromise your integrity for acceptance? My response: It depends on your view of free will. If you believe we have free will, then we're responsible for the choices we make. But the question still is whether we are in fact making those choices, or if it's done by the "black box". It's the debate between Daniel Dennett, a proponent of free will and Robert Sapolsky, who doesn't think we have free will. It also depends on how you're going to process cognitive dissonance over the whole of your life. Some people don't have a problem with being a chameleon and others always will.

You'll feel more comfortable in life if you don't go beyond your station, but you might get imposter syndrome—successful, but feeling that it's wrong in some way. You can't have it both ways. A lot of people try but it doesn't work out ultimately. This could be why fascism arises—people want the security of the group, which is the easiest way to resolve cognitive dissonance—especially if you are highly esteemed by others. It's harder to let that go, understandably. But there's a cost. Some people are okay with paying it to the grave--a true "sunk cost". Maybe that's how it got its name.

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Your main objective as an AI music artist is to create a song you wouldn't skip over on a playlist. This is different from what a real songwriter does. The former is a listener to what other people have already created, the latter the listening to your inner voice and being guided by your sense of style. When I pick up a guitar or bass, I am playing it with my hands, not someone else's. But at some point, the songwriter is a listener and the mixing and mastering stage--if at all. Some artists let other people do those things. This is sort of what AI music is, but it didn't come from you.

May 22nds

5/22/2021

Comparing my morning routines over decades to new kinds of routines for younger generations which center around social media first thing in the morning, it's not what I do or would want to. This morning I had started to compose a short string quartet for one of the *Music For Photographs* pieces. Apparently, Mattise worked on art first thing. Edward Tufte does that as well. You have all day to check social media. I just checked in on it for a couple minutes and there's nothing there. I don't know why people are zombified by social media.

5/22/2022

I recently watched the film *Last Night In Soho*. I really liked the musical direction. In the Extra, the director was talking about his creative process based on a small record collection that his family had, so it wasn't the typical music that you would think would be from the 1960s. For example, it didn't have any Stones or Beatles albums, and for obvious reasons, because that would have been too expensive to get rights. The alternate pieces of music were probably cheaper but were also very effective because it's an interpretation of the music of the 1960s. I grew up on the music of the 1960s as a child, so I know it from that generational perspective, listening to *Rubber Soul* on a little record player. But there are different interpretations, and I like this one a lot. There was one song that they used, *Set On You*, which George Harrison covered, and that's the one that I knew. I didn't know it was a cover. So when I heard it in the film, I thought it was a rendition of Harrison's original song done in a 1950s style, but then I realized Harrison had done it that way originally.

You assume that you know music comes from a certain period, and it's the only one that you know, and then when you hear another one, you think that maybe it was a cover of Harrison's original.

In the future, we'll know the 60s in a different way, so it's interesting how history becomes reshaped by the generations because they're only looking at it narrowly. In his case, he's looking at it through just a small record collection, and the record collection is featured in the film. I think there should be other films based on the 60s by Gen Z, or maybe they'll pick another decade like the 1980s. I'd really like to see that!

5/22/2023

Book: *In Praise of Walking*. I like this. Walking is great for working out song forms, particularly background vocals in choruses. Also, "Walking alone makes you smarter".

5/22/2024

As is typical in May, massive destructive tornadoes sweep across the Midwest. Yesterday all the storm chasers were champing at the bit to put it in the cross-hairs. Storm chasers just like the disaster movie thing and the videos they post to YouTube are just Twister sequels. The idea is that they are doing something useful by warning people, but aren't we savvier than that at this point? A tornado hit Greenfield Iowa and must have been an EF5, The homes were slabbed off their foundations. I don't think it's the result of climate change. I also think it's partly due to the "sharing" culture, which we all do reflexively for a dopamine shot to our otherwise mundane lives. (What the hell would we do without sharing videos?)

On nostalgia: the future usually sucks. My beef is with cloud software. Who wants to wait to type a sentence when this was no problem with installed software or a typewriter?

5/22/2025

When I studied with jazz composer Bill Russo, one of the rules was we couldn't use dots or ties. I suppose you could start with those constraints but I couldn't imagine a music that didn't have syncopation. We couldn't have jazz or rock 'n' roll without it so it was always ironic for me. There's also the idea of "rule drift" where you build in that eventuality. Making something involves steering it to a conclusion, or is a process of "fixing" things that don't work and rules don't allow for that, so you "jailbreak" it.

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Book: *How the Entrepreneurial Work Ethic Exhausted America*. Thoughts: Think about how the word "creativity" has been generalized. Does it mean productivity, innovation, imagination, resourcefulness? It still holds its postwar meaning, having to do with work and productivity, and its connection with art as a way of self-expression and a way to happiness. But it got redefined again in the 21st century by the Boomer and GenX generations using the internet. (It certainly did for me) Perhaps all new tools and technologies change language and thought and allow us to extrapolate the new meanings of words into action. It's a very bottom-up idea that people gravitate to because it's a manifestation of freedom, but not necessarily of democracy. Creativity can be seen as an alternative to government control, also seen as being oppressive. Combine this with the rise of rock'n'roll in the 50s and the evolution of the word is clear, and you could deduce that Jan6 was a reaction to a top-level Oppressor, that being the US government and taxation, and

we went Sex Pistols and Ramones. Before Musk had a meltdown I saw him as an artist. So the word "artist" has now been redefined by the techbros, not actual artists throughout history. It goes all the way back to the New Thought-influenced entrepreneurial work ethic, which emphasized the individual's ability to "create new opportunities" by tapping into their "unique talents and imagination", redounding to feelings of childhood excitement when kids discover a passion and want to make a mark on the world. But only a handful of people actually do that, and they redefine the words even further. "Creativity" means something different to an audience of a TED talk by Eric Schmidt as opposed to David Byrne, which has to do with ideas of top-down control. Who gets to have control over ideas in the context of creativity being about the ideas, and who can have them? Creativity in modernity is concerned with who can be a Player, not that anyone can play together and make a contribution. Once creativity is combined with capitalism, it's largely about who can be a Player. David Byrne is a Player, and a player (true artist). Musk has always been a Player writ large, and seldom a player as artists play as a way to be joyful. It has to do with dominance and oppression, so it's wildly ironic that the techbros rail against that. They are players in "mammalian" status games driven by ego. My definition of creativity has always been about ideas as "sparks"--very much how David Lynch had thought of them as catching fish, and the excitement of a new idea to bring joy to life. But Lynch was also a Player, something that is downplayed. He was in that whole Hollywood machine--so much he had lived there. Also, there's an issue of "neurodivergence" in the people who pursue creativity, however it's defined, in which case the definition of creativity is moot. The more interesting words are "intention" or "motivation" and whether control or dominance is in that word cloud or word microclimate.

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9/11 gave America the idea that guerrilla tactical warfare is more effective than big war machines. It didn't realize it for a decade. 2011 was the year it emerged in politics. And here we are.

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My philosophy on cleaning: Only clean to be functional. Cleaning something that doesn't really require it is a clue that something is missing or wrong in your life, or could just be boredom, but that could have a wrongness to it. Why are you bored all the time such that you have to clean? All this applies to mess and filth as well, where cleanliness isn't functional. But to some, "filth" is defined as a layer of one day of dust--even under a dresser.

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What's interesting about the current YouTube as opposed to a decade ago is that you get to see the old videos in context with the new videos, and the contrast is striking. You're looking into a world that used to exist, and it's the good world that I remember. Now everything is dark and dystopian, and you become nostalgic for the time of those old videos–8 years ago, 10 years ago, 16 years ago. And the numbers will continue to go up. By 2035, the numbers will be up to almost 30 years ago. Also watched an interesting video about someone who flew a drone into a tornado. This was like that video from a couple of years ago where they had put cameras on buoys in the Gulf of Mexico during a hurricane. We can put cameras anywhere now. I also like the idea that it's a probe and we don't necessarily have to go where probes can go. As long as we can probe Mars, what's the purpose of going there? We might as well save our money and make probes to go to all planets and moons.

May 23rds

5/23/1912, Paris

(Harry Kessler Diary)

Kessler picks up Stravinsky and takes him to [D Miller] Craig's, apparently who had been overwhelmed by so many people arriving that he was brusque with Stravinsky. Craig said he wanted to "rid music of everything that wasn't rhythm."

[Brian Eno once suggested in one of the "Swollen Appendices" that we could make music, but "leave the music out", meaning that music was really more of an expression of culture, i.e. a postmodern phenomenon. This was probably happening in 1912 as well where something was to be left out–namely, melody and harmony. That's exactly what happened 70 years later beginning hip-hop and rap. Now it seems to be wanting to go back in the other direction with metamodernism or remodernism].

5/23/2021

For the piece that I'm working on now (*Madame Bijou*), what I'm envisioning is 1930s Paris, and I'm scoring a scene in a movie that doesn't exist yet. One of the scenes is in a bar in Paris in 1932. Everybody understands what that could possibly be: there is some type of jazz playing, so there is piano, guitar or mandolin and probably some type of wind instrument. There can't be any electronic instruments, but on this track I am in fact using a lot of electronics, but it's just an anachronism—which is an interesting thing in itself but it has to be done correctly so that it's understood as being an anachronism and not just an error. Take painting for

instance: You have an idea of creating a conceptual work and you're using oils on canvas. As the piece progresses you have to look at it and say, how does that square with what I was originally thinking? Ultimately it has to be something else and it's fairly rare that anybody that's creating any kind of art form that it turns out exactly the way it was envisioned.

5/23/2023

Watched interview with Stewart Copeland. I love his manic music energy. He really knows how to change a room, which is what he did in The Police. Otherwise, Sting's music would all be in the "shadow of the ships". Copeland is an example of a right-hemisphere person. He's an "entrainer". They operate from a greater sense of freedom and openness, rather than closed, calculated and analytical. I'm more left-brained, more like an architect-engineer. Being around people that aren't "lefties" is very inspiring.

5/23/2024

If you look at nostalgia as making a movie about things that happened in the past, then its useful and didactic, especially if the people making those movies had actually lived in the times that the movie depicts.

Possible Dynaxiom: Living a full life means embracing all that's happened to you—not "moving on" as if you've moved to another part of the world and have no memories of where you used to live. This is something that impressed on me when I was watching the Paul Simon documentary last night. Songwriters have to include everything, even if they have to go into other characters to do it. That doesn't mean changing character as if you've completely lost a sense of yourself.

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Lapsed right-brain people are the worst. You could say the opposite about lapsed left-brain people. Some of it is the result of choices people are making, but are we in fact making them if we have no free will, a la Robert Sapolsky? (The world will do what it will with you).

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All new technologies make stars and celebrities. We had movie stars, TV stars, social media stars, and now perhaps we will have AI stars, which will make people want to be them, and then go into politics. It seems to be the life trajectory. Popularity makes us think we're good with people.

5/23/2025

The big meme now is the "slopified" life. It's true--this is what I was touching on years ago when I observed people "getting grub" instead of eating lunch or dinner, ordering from phone apps, like everything else. People actually live inside their phones as people used to live inside a TV. Donald Trump is the prime example of someone that lives inside a TV. Where we are in the world is partly because of this. We decry its decadence but we're all in the TV in some part of the day. Even if you watch 30 minutes of TV a day your psyche has been changed. Technology is the price you pay for living in the world. People go off the grid as a reaction but that's just another extreme. This morning I was looking a burtalist architecture, which is all about extremes--and staying there to make something interesting at those extremes. All of us are now adaptive extremophiles. Perhaps if you work with where you are you can come up with something that interests you--your inner sanctuary.

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Nate Hagens video: The 8 archetypes of the AI-user: The Meek, The Naïve, The Luddite, The Pragmatist, The Flexor, The Achiever, The Cyborg, The Dissolved. It used to be just "The Geek" but perhaps there has always been different variations on it and we didn't realize it. The problem I have with categorizing people is that it can fall into the Fundamental Attribution Error--"that person is always like this". It's always going to be the case on myriad topics that people don't care about certain things. Some people still don't care about computers and have never really used them outside of a job, and never really did anything on them that involved creating and managing lots of files--like music recording for example. On technology I'm always excited about the possibilities (initially) until people kill it, or just becomes a juggernaut like social media. For me, it's all about using them for creative purposes. I couldn't tear myself away from Photoshop and Illustrator when I first got it in 1997--not to mention Finale for music notation. It's conceivable that The Meek and Naive don't even know what that is and aren't even curious.

May 24ths

5/24/2021

Apparently, lots of people are digitizing their cassette and DAT collections. So all this material is being uploaded to the cloud, and I'm wondering how any of this stuff can have any relevance. It's interesting because I have done it a little bit with my tape collection, making mix tapes of world music primarily. Subsequently, I went back and searched for all those songs on YouTube and found a lot of them and made playlists for each tape. It's an interesting way to revisit what you listened to before, but the listening experience is different because all mediums have their own unique interactivity based on what the mediums do or don't do. Even though we're digitizing them, the original affordances have disappeared: we don't have tape machines anymore, and we don't sit down and listen to a tape. What I found interesting on one of them was a cassette of *Dark Side of the Moon*. I only listened to that album on vinyl. I never owned a tape of it, so I never had that experience of it. Art forms can never be equal. You can digitalize and virtualize them, but they're never equal. Anything virtual is never equal.

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A part of the reason we now have the attention economy is to get things into rotation. That's how it always worked–that's the way it worked in radio–a constant rotation of 50 songs per day, or less. If you listen to the radio all day long you would hear a song perhaps 3 or 4 times, so there was a saturation. It's impossible to get saturation these days because you constantly have to influence it so that it gets into rotation. But it's a phony relevance, whereas it wasn't in the AM radio days.

5/24/2022

The current book I'm reading is *The Price of Immortality* and is particularly interesting vis-a-vis *Reset*. What's interesting about Russia is that there are lots of people interested in transhumanism, the Cosmists and its connection with Russian Orthodoxy going back to the 19th century.

Some have really complicated systems with backup copies on different kinds of devices and hermetically sealing them so that 200 years in the future there will be a "resurrection".

But what's going to be the state of artificial intelligence in 200 years? Even now you can't play a CD from the late 90s.

I'm reminded of the *Last Night in Soho* film where younger generations view the 60s through the lens of a family member's record collection. In 200 years, hard drives would be the record collection. Perhaps it would be immortal but not immortal in the way that the person wanted it to be. People aren't always exact copies of themselves; people are always evolving psychologically. It can only be an interpretation because you don't have all the context and people aren't going to spend the time to go through someone's incunabula. Usually they cherry-pick things and then history is based just on those cherries. History is a form of cherry-picking.

5/24/2023

Possible riff: Dealing with changing inputs we have no control over, forcing us to respond in ways against our nature.

Tina Turner died at 83. The front page of the Guardian has this story strangely juxtaposed with the announcement that the extremist/racist DeSantis is running for president. What's always ironic in the US, and probably globally, is

that the anti-woke oppressors might even admire the woke oppressed, but only in the slim margins where they feel comfortable, or where the tribe would approve. It's like the public playlist: "Can't let the world know I like a Carpenters song."

"Failure to launch: Twitter glitches deal double blow to Elon Musk and Ron DeSantis. What liberals may have feared as the alliance of two anti-woke villains, turned out to have the menace of a damp dishcloth." (Like the spot on the lens)

5/24/2024

Interesting: Some Boomers don't really understand the 90s--just as much as Millennials born then, especially the early 90s when the Culture Wars began. They wind up understanding the world in a kind of an in-group "private Idaho". Some Silents didn't understand anything after the 1950s, nor did their children. What was good about having a wide generational horizon is that you have wider peripheral vision. But almost all Boomers don't fully understand the 21st century, including people in positions of high power, now in their 80s. But it's nice that they still want to be in politics, but they suck all the air out of the 21st century. Eno: "Perhaps people who feel their own lives are unfulfilled are inclined to lavish more time on their children's."

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This is a good bit on the effect of postmodernism in general, by Caroline Myss. I can't say I can agree with the letter of this, but the spirit is there. Essentially, anything goes and everyone is on their own. Individualism was the collective choice we made in the 1960s. I like her theory about the effects of the nuclear age, the Anthropocene essentially. This was uploaded in 2021 and could have been recorded earli-

er. In retrospect, the unraveling started in the early 1990s, although some take it back to the 1930s with opposition to the New Deal. I've noticed a decline since around 2005 where people started to care less and less about other people outside their nuclear families and tribes. The "nuclear age" also means the nuclear family, not the extended family. A few weeks ago I stumbled on a home movie shot in 1960 of a Easter holiday. There must have been 30 people around a dinner table. Those days are long gone. Some people don't even want the nostalgia.

5/24/2025

Skills are useful, even if useless. AI isn't a skill yet, just as computers weren't a skill when people started buying PCs in the 1970s. New technologies produce new skills for some people but most people are Users at some level which may or may not require skills, yet they create more work. A washing machine as a new technology a century ago required skills to mass-produce them, but the housewife, while having a new convenience, didn't get any new real skills. Laundry was still a chore that took time away from other things she might want to do. Computers were different in that they produced new skills at the hardware level, as one could build a computer from scratch. The people who had those skills also could use software more easily, and perhaps could code it. The same thing is happening now with AI, but it's all at the coding and software levels. Now that software mostly runs in a browser we're disabused of having to install it and be trained on how to use it. We can learn things by interacting online, and search for answers through chatbots. AI is doing the same thing in that they didn't have the effect of creating new skills at the level of a person making them and not producing any rigorous skills--just as washing machines didn't. We're disabused of the manual "washboard" and "ringer" aspects, and hanging clothes on a line. Like the housewife

who got her first washing machine in the 1940s or 1950s, could do other things that might interest her like reading novels or engaging with what was culturally significant at the time, perhaps watching TV or talking on the telephone. AI would be seen as useful to some people if it were more like a washing machine: simply making things simpler and using the saved time to become skillful at something else, even if useless. The important thing is to have skills and use (work at) them every day. Play may result in unique skills, but will require work to cultivate them. The problem is that conveniences steer us away from skill. The housewife in the 1950s may have had unique skills but they went to seed by watching TV and talking on the telephone.

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If work is so important to Republican ideals, why isn't there a discussion why the Oppressed hate being a slave? It's the illusion that success in life is all about everything that you did, which has never been the case. People got where they are in life with blue blood, silver spoons, and sugar daddies.

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If you like a person for that one thing: their smile, their mind, their ass...it'll all be different at some point: the teeth yellowed, you changed your minds, the asses went flat/fat. This can happen with things you used to be interested in if you're not careful. It's the recipe for depression--which perhaps related to not keeping up with all the "useless" skill. At least your hands and mind will be busy and The Muse will find a new interest in you.

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Started perusing *Did It Happen Here--Perspectives on Fascism in America.* Words are powerful. In music, words are powerful in a different way. Some are unusable because they are musically clumsy or created unwanted artefacts, such as silibance, such as "useless mysticism" which has 4 s's in one bar. It becomes a "hi-hat scat".

Dynaxiom Draft: Dictatorships are an attempt to stop the march of time. But so is the resistance. [Time itself is different from history, which shows that time can repeat itself and we don't just travel for light years on straight roads].

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Cheating reading: Reading only AI-generated summaries. The book wasn't always better than the movie.

To CCC for Tom Torluemke exhibition. Amazing body of work, mostly large watercolor, the most unforgiving medium. Liked them a lot. The large work at the entrance, a collage work, the piece de resistance. F. said they looked childish. I don't think that at all. On the way home the usual annoyances on the El--this time a rapper and his phone. People don't seem to mind and go about their business. I don't have a book with me so I have to keep busy ranting to myself. Perhaps there's a genius to this that I fail to grasp. We used to play along with records so perhaps it's how it's done now.

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Needless to say, people have thrived in the worst of times as well as failing in the best of times.

May 25ths

5/25/2021

Finally reading McGill's book *Sincerity* (2012), a section that cited the writings of David Foster Wallace–one of them written in 1993, and he was saying that he was already sick of irony, even in the beginning of irony. I got sick of it too. Even though I love ambient music and have many influences in that genre, I just got tired of doing it after a while because perhaps I'm being insincere to myself by experimenting with other things, and I find myself going back to the things I was doing before, as it feels more sincere, but we never really know. It really comes down to free will.

My theory is that there are different free wills, and we have to find the one that works for us, and sincerity is the free will that we want to use in the moment. There are other ones that can be running in the background, and we don't know exactly how they're controlling our lives, but a lot of it probably arises from childhood and other points in our lives. Just living on the planet, everybody shares a "communal" free will. Postmodern irony is a communal *alternate* free will: you may really want to do something–listen to some esoteric or obscure music, but you have to be politically correct. Social media has a lot to do with artificial sincerities and looking cool–and having to keep that up throughout your life. I tire of it because I just want to get on with life. I sometimes want to do things from a "spiritual" standpoint.

When people say that they're being "spiritual," it can throw up a flag because none of us really understand what that actually means. To me, it's a feeling flow without troubling anxiety; you're in the moment, and things are nicely going

along, and you have a sense of well-being. That's all you really need. Some people can be in a flow with irony and they can be very successful being an ironist, but I find it kind of boring and tedious, even though in my decampments from postmodernism, I do tedious work. The reason we might do things with artificial sincerity is just for the sake of not being boring or doing boring things, but boring might be in again. Sometimes I'll just write little string quartets. I kind of like it as a form of tinkering. The critics would pounce on it because you're expected to do cool postmodern things. To me, it's like getting an idea for making something for dinner: there are certain recipes that I know by heart, and I can just make them if I feel like it. I go out and buy the ingredients and I make it, similar to wanting to write a string quartet.

It's important to use the skills that you've developed, and I wonder why people choose not to use them and use the skills of social irony instead, and can become very successful at doing it. You don't want to be seen as being too sincere, like the guy who's tinkering in the shop. They know they're doing the things with the skills that they have–that's the sincerity–you're being sincere to yourself. The problem comes when we start sharing these things as a form of art. People analyze your intentions: "What is he trying to say here?" He might not be saying anything: John Lennon sometimes had that problem where people were always trying to read something into his cryptic lyrics, and he always explained by saying it was just wordplay. But people read other things into it. It works the same way with visual art: "What's he saying?" When you're doing visual art, those kinds of thoughts cross your mind, and you can start to be clever. Wordplay is cleverness. In visual art, you have the corollary of wordplay where you're playing with concepts and ideas. In McGill's book, there was a section about an interview with Michael Stipe after he had created some kind of conceptual work, and he was explaining what his intentions were. The critics

pounced on it, as they typically do with musicians who also do other things. Generally, people think you should just do one thing, and they question your intentions if you aren't. Brian Eno talked about that a long time ago. It's a problem he's always had, but creative people understand that you just do what you do. You're being sincere to yourself, and you don't ask for approval. But apparently, you have to think about how people are going to question your sincerity. This tedious process of constantly trying to figure out how you're going to be seen becomes a point of paralysis in the creative process. But it's part of culture and you have to play the culture game. But if you can talk about the things that you do it can clarify it in your own mind. It's kind of a "therapy". That's why I think interviews are important because they allow for this therapeutic aspect to come into art because modern and contemporary art requires thought because it's abstract, and abstraction makes things murky and it needs clarification with language. It's important that we speak and write about our work to clarify our intentions. We have them of course, but we're not thinking about them at the time we're making something.

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On Ron Carter's channel someone asked what the future of jazz is. That's usually the most popular one that comes at the end. The point he made, and it's a good one, is that there's no place left. All the arts and even the sciences need a *place*–they just can't happen virtually. The whole virtual idea is going to hit a brick wall when we realize we're going to need to bring back Place because it's so important for people to be in one room and to not have any connection with the network–at least while you're working and creating. Like they used to say in the 60s, it "destroys the creative microbes". What really matters is an ecosystem for the arts to flourish. The digital space is starting to grow because of the popular-

ity of the blockchain but that's just temporary scaffolding. I think that's going to fade. We seem to be trying to create places but the places are made of the scaffold. Consider building a building: you build the scaffold, you bring in the crane and then it just sits there. You have your scaffold up–it looks like a building but there's no building there.

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Evidence that we're a low-context society is that people typically can't see the context or they don't want to see the context because that takes time. People aren't going to put time into doing that kind of thing so there's a constant giving people the context–if hey listen. It used to be where people would listen if you gave them the context. Now it's overkill as everyone is in a rush to get on to the next thing. This snowball effect is creating a miasma of misunderstanding, because if you zoomed out for the overview effect of what was happening on the planet now, things would change drastically. People are at the ground level when we should take a bird's eye view and seeing the context of it historically. But again, people just don't pay attention. Sometimes I don't because of having to get to the next thing, or back to the thing you were working on.

5/25/2022

Another school shooting in Uvalde Texas. This is getting to be so routine that you just tune in for a little while for the details and then you have to go about your business. We aren't all capable of being full-time activists. We can sign petitions and talk to people about it but it doesn't really affect the system. I've grown to like Eckhart Tolle. He's the new Alan Watts. He's quite interesting, sometimes witty and funny. A few days ago I watched a clip about mind viruses that "spread" through the collective unconscious (or what some

call the "psychosphere"). They're memes essentially and they float around like spores that infect troubled adolescents or whose brains aren't fully developed or socialized.

This also reminded me of Columbine: In my diary entry for that day, I predicted that it would be happening at grade schools as well. And that's exactly what's happening. It's both generational and anthropological. In 1999, kids in high school were born in the mid-70s, so I wonder what was happening in schools at that time that was unique to GenX?

In Scott Attran's book *Talking To the Enemy* he talked about the seemingly innocuous after-school activities, playing basketball and so on, which became a hotbed of international terrorism undetected on the radar of teachers and parents ("The ordinariness of terror"). He found that subjects appeared to capitulate to conformity by recalibrating in parts of the brain dedicated to visual processing, which suggests that people might actually picture reality differently under peer pressure, especially in high schools. So there has to be some kind of "policing" of youths which was typically done at schools, which might be a form of the usual rebelliousness. Around Columbine I was also thinking whether high school (or even grade school) was essential, given more people have opted for homeschooling or "unschooling". Kids need to be guided in the direction of their proclivities and learning style that they carry with them throughout life. I certainly knew that by the time I was 18.

[5/25/2024: Interesting: "Exactly two years after the Uvalde school massacre, families of victims Friday filed multiple state lawsuits in California and Texas against social media giant Meta, Activision — the maker of the popular video game "Call of Duty" — and Daniel Defense, the manufacturer of the AR-15 which the teen gunman used in the shooting." What's particularly interesting for me is to see the

events temporally and contemporaneously—vis-a-vis all the strange 21st century dystopian Americana spinning out in our never-ending disaster movie. One of the main antagonists is the social network called Facebook].

5/25/2023

This morning I was wondering what people do when they first wake up in the morning. Various people have given me their suggestions on what we typically do, which shouldn't involve media of any kind and include more things like meditation and prayer (these days).

Before the internet, and at the very beginning of it, I would work on songs. Even in the early 90s, I was not a TV person who had to have it on continuously in the background. But this morning I was wondering what was happening with some people that I haven't heard from in a while. Now the news is almost all "pull" because all the "push" stuff is neoliberalist/consumerist crap as it always has been. Even if you train your algorithm (as if it has even the basic intelligence of a cat) it will still push all the bad stuff at you and you have to make a concerted effort to find the things that you really want to engage with.

This morning I was wondering what's been happening with Marianne Williamson. Even though I subscribe to her YouTube channel I haven't seen many videos, probably a result of algorithmic churn that maximizes ad revenue. (You can't really place many ads in the middle of a Marianne Williams lecture).

The lecture I was watching was done a few days ago and she was talking about what it is that people really want. She had gone to Palestine, Ohio post-derailment. You would think that what the people wanted there is justice for corporate

corruption and greed. But one person said they wanted her to protect the Second Amendment—even after all they went through. They wake up with guns and prayers. #riff

5/25/2024

Yesterday I was reading an interesting article by Cory Doctorow about linkrot, and the fact that content not even a decade old has dead hyperlinks.[5] Then I stumbled on an article from May 2023 I had saved about an art exhibit in my area about making art out of the data of everyday life, and I realized that's what I have been doing all along: If you become a collector of life you can develop your own "internet" that naturally creates its own hyperlinks through the process of encoding—like the encoding of memories.

Lately, I have been using my own lifelogs (or "personal data mining") as grist for songs, tentatively titled *Songdays*, but may become *Abstractions of Life* or *Abstractions From Today.* Per Doctorow, we can't rely on the internet for the integrity of history and memory. This is where art can be used as both storytelling and memoir.

When I went to share this post on the Post social media website, there was a notice that it would be shutting down 5/31 which is truly poetic. The next time you set a link or use a link, think about its potential expiration. This isn't a new topic or phenomenon by any means. I always cite Stewart Brand's *Written On the Wind* piece from 1998. That link should last for 10,000 years.[6]

5. https://doctorow.medium.com/https-pluralistic-net-2024-05-21-noway-back-machine-pew-pew-pew-a5ee2b44c2d4

6. https://longnow.org/essays/written-wind/

There was another interesting article about Elizabeth Clare Prophet, who apparently died in 2009. I was reminded of the late 1980s when I had a friend that followed her, which was songwriting grist for me. One of the songs was *Path of Salvation*, which referenced "the violet flame" that she used in her teachings. I see it as just another manifestation of the demon-haunted world that some of us are (still) prey to believing. (Nice title: "Prey To Belief").

There was an interesting painting that was used in the article, a kind of photorealist work (who knows it could have been generated by AI—there was no byline) that has the perfect mood, just beyond exurbia into the hinterlands of the demon-haunted world. There was another song I wrote in the mid-90s, *Movin' To Montana*, which wasn't about her, but rather the Unabomber, and a wink at Frank Zappa's song of the same title about a dental floss tycoon. I thought that Montana was that comfortable hinterland. It was almost a joke at the time, but now in the 2020s it has new gravitas—a gallows humor. I can only imagine what Zappa would have been saying. He died about the time I was writing those songs, amid Waco and the Branch Davidians in 1993. In terms of the Songdays, more grist for the mill.

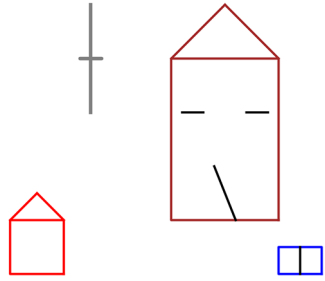
Hey ChatGPT...write a story a paragraph long about a ranch in Corwin Springs, Montana formerly occupied by Elizabeth Clare Prophet.

A partial result:

"The once-vibrant Summit Lighthouse Ranch in Corwin Springs, Montana, now lay in tranquil repose, its history steeped in the teachings of its former occupant, Elizabeth Clare Prophet. The vast expanse of the ranch, set against the majestic backdrop of the Yellowstone River and the soaring Gallatin Range, echoed with whispers of spiritual gather-

ings and meditative retreats. Years ago, the ranch bustled with followers seeking enlightenment, their voices blending with the murmurs of the wind and the rustle of aspen leaves. Now, the buildings stood quietly, their walls imbued with a sense of serenity and the lingering energy of past prayers and chants. Wildflowers bloomed in abundance, reclaiming the meditation gardens, while deer roamed freely, undisturbed. As the sun set, casting a golden glow over the land, the spirit of the ranch seemed to breathe, holding within its heart the echoes of Prophet's legacy and the promise of peace for those who wandered its paths." (This goes perfectly with this image...What I like about AI thus far is the possibility for the uncanny...)

I then described the image and it returned this sketch, as if it was a schematic that we would have put on the Golden Disc in interstellar space to be picked up by civilizations on other planets. Other generated images approximated it from a description. It's an interesting way to scout locations and to storyboard possible films.



5/25/2025

5/25/2000: "Prediction: Computers will be very inexpensive, will be made of cheap recycled material, so you can guiltlessly toss it after a year, at which time it will be worth less than the recycled material."

[Idea: Computers for a lifetime, bespoke in terms of design with swappable components].

Sundays are my primary reading day. Lots of new books to get through. But I find myself going back to the old ones. This morning I came across a riff I did back in 2021 on sincerity, so I went back to McGill's 2012 book and ran it through the AI mill. Quite interesting. This is where AI is useful in these revistitations of interesting topics.

Imagine that technology was extremely finite and that we would reach an end of technology where there would be nothing that we could invent. We would reach the end of the idea of a continuous evolution of technology. We would then realize that the things that we would invent that would seem new wouldn't really be of any service to the current civilization.

May 26ths

5/26/2022

Listened to the Sam Harris interview with philosopher Jay Garfield. He used the analogy of money and how value is imputed by a "package" of cultural values which differentiates fungible iterations. This is a possible philosophical explanation of how an NFT can have value beyond what appears on the surface. To some extent, almost all contemporary conceptual art is about what doesn't appear on the surface, and is up to the viewer to interpret. The problem in my view is that in the absence of an explanation provided by the artist, there is no stable "valuation", so in the NFT world the "white painting" or "black painting" can be done in any form by anyone and perhaps have more value than a Robert Ryman or an Ad Reinhardt if those artist names aren't present. If more artists titrated doing them as a kind of parody, something would have to affect their fungibility, so the NFT is a way to do that, but in my view is less conceptually interesting, but might gather some remuneration, perhaps more than what a Ryman would go for.

5/26/2023

I think I'm on Tina Turner overload. I'm reminded of the days and weeks after Diana. What is the operative human universal? The biggest takeaway is that she knew her archetypes and used them as a source of power. She was unique in that she knew how to do that, or learned how.

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Apparently, there's now a Betty White museum in Oak Park started by an AirBnB. White lived in Oak Park as a baby for a mere 3 months. The museum is the size of a closet in the old space of Val's Halla record store—and not even open to the public! (I miss that place and Val) Oak Park will be known as name-dropper city. Ugh, this person also created Betty White day on, you guessed it, MLK Day.

***

More and more I see songwriting as making a painting. Not that it's "painterly" in its emotion, but rather a collection of "events" or "markers" that are deeply (sometimes methodically) contemplated. This is where it's more compositional than improvisatory. I like making the frameworks in which improvisation can happen.

5/26/2024

When people first encounter something they first scan for something familiar, then something they don't like. Liking something (not in social media terms) means it passed the first part and failed the second part.

***

Watched the first episode of the Paul Simon documentary. I didn't realize there were two "verses". I liked the segment about the *Cecilia* sessions where they merged two 8-track boards but they were an eighth note out of sync and created a natural delay effect, not to mention the hugely hilarious use of 4 synced tape machines! It was the perfectly happy industrial-strength accident, which are in essence, synchronicities. A few days ago I was watching a Martha Beck video on the "spiritual docking station" which is the intentional noticing of coincidences. It's interesting how we create

"artificial" synchronicities by simply being more observant and aware, and able to take advantage of them (using the right hemisphere) rather than being passed off as errors (left hemisphere). Imagine *Cecilia* without the industrially-produced eighth note claps. The problem with getting attached to the idea of happy accidents is that you're looking for them too much and they start to become meaningless. They have to be like the scarab that flies into the room. Now with the cicada swarms, one flying in at some point would indeed be a synchronicity. Also, Paul Simon has Harry Partch's Chromolodeon—I can't imagine that would be usable for something, as historically fascinating as it is.

***

I've been collecting the Songdays for two months now so I have about 60 ideas. This is like making a small prototype for a sculpture every day, and now I have them scattered all over the studio. Paul Simon had talked about having to find a sound for his recent album, and that's my current logjam. Perhaps I should work from visuals or find a concept or narrative. Should I make artworks first? I've also experienced this when making the Dynaxiom videos, where it's easier to make them starting with the visuals than with the words. I recall Todd Rundgren saying he would use one of the songs as a sonic template for the whole album. I ran across this errant bit: "You are collecting fragments of your life almost as an archaeologist gathers the shards of ancient pottery. Later these fragments will organize themselves because they "know" where they belong."

5/26/2025

What's good about being an artist for one's whole life is that it allows us to be childlike in profoundly philosophical ways. Once an artist reaches their 60s they are probably still inter-

ested in things they did in their 20s. For most people, their 20s have no impact on what they're doing in their 60s and beyond. I don't mind doing what to others might seem silly for a man with gray hair, creating music videos to EDM. Somehow your creativity must adhere to the rules of old age and that you should embody those archetypes, choosing bingo, shuffleboard and performances of Beethoven over things you liked in your 20s and 30s (even though I liked Beethoven in my 20s). The expectation is that you should have gone through a conversion and desensitization process with a therapist. But this is distinctly different from dressing as you did when you were in your 20s. When you're in your 60s as your hair is graying, you have to recontextualize it with your wardrobe. Artistic "wardrobes" are easy to do and they don't have to match your real wardrobe: an aging man in a nice shirt and slacks can still be creating art that younger people would be making. The art that you make doesn't have to match your persona (I don't think). I don't want to just write classical music, or has a friend suggested, that I should no longer play an electric bass and get an acoustic bass, probably because it is "acting my age". My go-to look is "architect" because I can wear it well and contextualize it with things that are more fashion-focused, such as a playful decoration on a building. Think Philip Johnson who brought a playful silliness to architecture in context with the grids of the engineering process. Another analogy is Cindy Sherman.

***

Very often our illnesses are the result of attempting to fit in (You're not OK and also not OK--we're in this boat together). They can of course be real, but could be the result of historical stresses acquired from your parents and grandparents. Illnesses can be a kind of "family value".

***

Watched Caroline Myss video, "Drop the Illusion". I found this bit very musical. She tends to repeat things in a rhythmic way. More and more I think artists will have to go mystical in the 2020s, as many artists have been in the past. (Jon Anderson was always a fairy) Postmodernism did away with the mystical. Mysticism also keeps you from becoming religious as well. Mysticism is a religion made just for you.

You got to hold on to it
You really have to have it
You got to hold on to it
Here comes the story
Really got to have it
You'll be young forever
You really got to have it

May 27ths

5/27/2021

My artwork is often based on systems, which is understandable because I come from a music background. It sometimes creates the framework for the things that I do–like the "intervals" series, based on musical intervals, which was mapped across the " Black White & Red" series but there were other series where I correlated the chromatic scale to color ranges. "Phases" was another piece that used musical metaphors. I never apologize for that. Some people say that my work is cold. Actually I think emotion in music is more readily available just from the way that you approach your instrument-–how you play the strings–how you play the keys–dynamics–that's all an emotional Thing. I'm getting the emotionality from art through music mostly but also the system of music and the system of art.

***

An interesting use of AI would be in a collaborative environment where you'd be able to set up teams of two or four people and you could assign them to characters. You could be John Lennon, someone else is Paul McCartney. Or you could reverse it. You'd have settings for different bands and you could switch them around. As you're working writing a song there would be some other character there that would be throwing in something. That would be cool and fun.

***

It's been a fairly active podcast listening morning, an interview between Sam Harris and James Fadiman, and a

previous podcast that I had listened to about a book being written about Richard Branson and Virgin Galactic, and the space tourism idea. He was saying that as he's been writing this book for the past five years, he's had some takeaways that changed his mind in essential ways, and he thought differently about the idea of space travel or just going to the edge of space as a kind of vacation, which is that he didn't even want to go. He had no interest in it after learning the things he did.

The one that I'm listening to now with James Fadiman about psychedelics is that all space travel can be done spiritually and internally, which I think is the better way because it changes us. I don't think going to the edge of space is going to be an overview effect. People are thinking that there's going to be this spiritual transformation by going to the edge of space. There are many stresses involved. It's nice going up, and you can feel the gravitational forces, but it is a real drag coming down. And after doing all the training, it's not really worth it. The better way is to go inward. For me it's through the arts. I get psychoactive results from just being a musician. It does things to my brain that create a positive feeling. But it's not permanent. All these things are actually very temporary. Permanent change is probable with psychoactive drugs because we're all just kind of made of chemicals anyway. Our brain is being rewired in context with our environment, and how the chemicals are interacting, and how the nerves are firing.

Inward travels are what we really want. We don't just want external things that we do to keep from being bored. Once we get to a plateau with edge travel, we have to go to the next level because it's the next linear step. The next linear step is Mars and once we achieve that, then that becomes boring. It's perhaps just a matter of doing things that we think are exciting just to keep from being bored.

5/27/2023

Went to cemetery to visit Mom and Dad's grave, a nice thing to do on this Memorial Day weekend. (F. calls it "Memory Day", which I like). It took a long time to find the grave, probably because I was working from memory. They have a nice spot under a (now very large) tree. I recognized other family names of relatives (Calzaretta, Sinise). Then stopped by Lake Catherine, a riparian lake, like the Saganashkee. (No song ideas this time). Every tree and bench has a dedication plaque. That's like caption cards with ad space.

Most cemeteries are uncanny places. There are always very few people there, and almost every grave is bereft of objects of remembrance, some so small they are completely hidden by thick sod and organic duff. You also realize that cemeteries, mausoleums, and gravestones, are a huge business. Most cemeteries are ringed with businesses supporting them. Apparently, building permits are required for mausoleums. Small detail. This, however, is in contrast to Graceland, one of my favorite cemeteries in the Chicago area.

I found this errant Sebald quote:

"I think how little we can hold in mind, how everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life, how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of countless places and objects which themselves have no power or memory is never heard, never described or passed on."—W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*

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I'm so tired of hearing about AI, just like I was tired of hearing about NFTs. For the past 5 years I've been reading about the mythic nature of AI, and now it's creating its own myths

that I have little interest in, even though it was of deeper interest around *Ancient AI* (2017). P. said it's like all cultural memes of a toy variety, cabbage-patch dolls, etc., but it's a creepy doll, like Elon Musk.

I've been interested in AI for some time—since the mid 90s when I started to get interested in Marvin Minsky, specifically *Society of Mind*. It's interesting to revisit what he said then compared to what's happening today. I think what we have now is the demon-haunted world that Carl Sagan warned us about. Once it gets to that point where there's no rational collective discussion, it's more difficult to be personally rational because we seem to now be insidiously influenced by whatever the network wants. For example, people who you thought were esteemed philosophers are now seemingly on the AI bandwagon, probably because it's good for channel ratings.

I just checked John Vervaeke's channel. I've always liked his lectures and interviews but now he's gotten on the AI bandwagon, the "AI is going to kill humanity" kind of thing. It's all just "AI washing".

5/27/2025

Rick Derringer died. Saw him in 1976 on the bill with Aerosmith at Comiskey Park. My first concert I think. The guy was full of life.

Now that many people are content producers, they also have to be (populist) art directors--who are not exactly artists in the traditional sense, as they have to pander to public tastes. Artists sometimes have to do this to ascribe to the demands of capitalism. You can exhibit your artwork in an art fair, but it has to be in the capitalist arena, not the (arrogant) museum arena. People pick up on this immediately. The art

must be marketable, i.e. decorative in some way. People who buy art at art fairs are usually not collectors, and the art, however good it is, won't ever hang in a museum. Museum art doesn't touch an art fair with a barge pole. This is a good corollary with populist politics where the progressive elites (the museum and the museum-goers) are demonized by the populists as being out of touch with their worldview. It's a shame that all the good work I've seen at art fairs could never be in museum, as it should.

***

Once something has existed for a generation (~20 years) it's baked in the cake for several generations. Everyone eventually used a telephone. There are very few humans on the planet who have never used a telephone unless they are primitives--and so on down the line: TV, computers, the internet, social media, AI. Some require more involvement such as computers, the internet and AI. Some want to stay with technologies where they don't have to participate and sit on the side lines, or simply opt-out into indifferent oblivion. Their loved ones are there playing in the games, and the parents slip out the back door, like my father did when I invited him to one of my performances. I saw him duck out to smoke a cigarette.

***

Observation: People don't like constraints. If you used them as an artist people will bristle that you left something out or were annoyed by the constraints: "Why can't you just do this", or "It's boring to use 3 colors--can't you do something brighter? The art experience for lots of people is the same as ordering from a menu of things they know will satisfy them. The artist is left forging ahead.

***

Quora: What makes music special and why do some people love it while others do not? Or what makes sports special, and some people don't care about it? Everything has the capacity to be special to us. Music is unique in that it is in the same constellation as language, whereas sports aren't because it's all embodied. But of course, music and sports are joined at the hip at the level of competition. So people might have an interest in music only through its competitive aspects and not the language aspects—songwriting, for example. The songs generated for songwriting competitions aren't at the same level as songs that became popular without competition, although the Top-40 was driven by that. Joni Mitchell had a few hits that put her there, but she wasn't competing for it. Music was more poetic for her, i.e., language-based.

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Article: AI in the Legal Profession: Engine of Productivity or Catalyst for Cognitive Decline? [7]

What I see as the new problem is the anxiety this kind of reporting produces, which makes people demonize AI and avoid it, just as people demonized and avoided technology since the advent of computers and the internet. Some people still use nether and aren't on social media.

Young people might be behind in a time when they're supposed to be ahead. It's okay to be vigilant and wary, but you should be on the team and playing the games.

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7. https://downbeach.com/news/2025/may/23/chris-surdak-on-ai-in-the-legal-profession-engine-of-productivity-or-catalyst-for-cognitive-decline/

Technology does involve play, and I can see how some of it is risky. Young people (and some old) are more willing to take the risks to kick the tires and be excited about the possibilities. Like rock'n' roll, The New shouldn't be limited by constraints, especially by government. But government is also rock'n'roll and punk now, and is abandoning safety and security. With AI, there can be the potential with cognitive decline with an over-reliance on AI , but a boost in others. The advent of rock didn't (initially) diminish an interest in classical music or jazz and enriched it. But eventually it faded, leaving behind its cognitive benefits. So the question is what are the most beneficial cognitive benefits in the current moment? What cognitive abilities benefit us all? I get a cognitive lift from music, but not everyone will if they're not interested. You have to create your own cognitive calisthenics now. You can get it from AI if you begin to get interested in the theory, as we do in music. You can choose the rigorous parts, but of course there has to be a motivating interest. Those who rely on a job skill for cognitive lift will lose it if they lose the job. I think social media made us more stupid than AI ever will because it's all about being a star with endless high ratings for everything you do, not that any of it really means anything to you when you're honest with yourself.

May 28ths

5/28/2021

Riffs:

The thing about training in anything that requires a lot of skill, like sports or music, is that there has to be some work involved in order to make that training effective, then it's all sublimated. I'm always reminded of the young Stravinsky, writing the ballets when he was in his 20s. *The Rite* was written in Switzerland in a small room with a spinet piano. It's fascinating to watch him work because he already had excellent training. It's something that's really devolved because we don't value it. It's almost absurd that someone would sit there and put notes on the page, disabused of a distracting toy–the smartphone. It was out of the sphere of consciousness. We're at that moment where we can confine our spheres of consciousness to the work that we do, and be mindful of that. Perhaps we're doing too much thinking these days and not enough working and being engaged with just enough community to lubricate the work and make it productive. I don't think we get that much creativity from just hanging out on social media.

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Digital music and art are somewhat lazy–but not in a bad way. But someone will show you a digital image of a painting, and when you zoom in and try to look at the brush strokes they're just virtual brush strokes, and could have been done in Photoshop or Painter. You see it on your phone and it's a beautiful image, but you can't [easily] make a print of it. You

can perhaps print it to an 8x10, but how interesting is that? What we want to see is the work. You want it to be a larger size. You want to see a painting that was made in weeks or months. That's more impressive. Similarly, in music we can take the short route and make something digital and use pre-made loops, but it's more impressive to see people actually play music at a high level because it takes so many years to develop those skills, and even more impressive when it's done continuously. The level of performance is always up to a fairly high standard. It's not like one night is virtuosic and the next night is a bunch of crap. The digital realm erases all that; we don't have to deal with things that are inconsistent. It's removing the human element and makes things easier to digest. We have the raw elements with non-digital art that sometimes is hard to digest in the sense that we have to travel to venues–there's work involved–it takes energy. You make a plan to go to the museum, and it's 20 miles away, so you have to fight through traffic. It's a form of work to get there. But you like the show and you're expending more energy at the show, and then you have to get back, and work to get back, but you have the memory of it. But the question becomes, do we want to keep doing this? Digital art makes it easier to digest, but in the end, I think we suffer for it because it becomes a shallow experience.

5/28/2022

I like the idea of buy-backs, but how do we prevent "recidivism", i.e. having a change of heart and buying more assault weapons? Go a step further and have people pledge to never buy a gun in the future. As to the confiscated guns, a collective of artists can construct a memorial. (You can pay people to accept history and constitutional laws and they will pass them and learn something but they aren't giving up their beliefs. They are their sunk costs, especially older people that have lived in the same communities most of their lives.)

5/28/2023

Worked on this (May) diary. I hope to get "Confection" into May. ("I've gotten my marching orders for music.")

5/28/2024

Dream:: Many little fragments (gathering stones): 1) I was walking up a narrow winding staircase and the walls were covered with artworks that had "Chicago" on them; 2) there was a large map of the US on a wall but it was a large screen that was an Excel spreadsheet; 3) I stopped in at the dentist office and the receptionist said she noticed I had gained weight. I replied that I was assiduously trying to take it off. She mentioned that I had not had my "DOM" scan yet and I asked what it was for. She said it was $400. I was thinking, "Dentists are all about making money" and walked out.

A post on Post, which is shutting down on 5/31. The fact that it's closing reminds me again that social media is a social dead end: "I never thought synchronicity was possible on social networks, but seeing a random post I suppose could be a trigger of some kind. We're all in a web of simultaneity, regardless of where it is encountered. Sometimes the coincidences aren't appreciated until later. Like yesterday I was noodling around on a guitar and found a nice chord change. Then I read Eno's 5/28/1995 post about collecting stones on a Beach, which gave meaning to the riff." (This was a useful metaphor for Songdays—it's like gathering stones that gather meaning later). PS: I did not get a single response to the post, meaning there was no (apparent) synchronicity. With almost the whole planet on some form of social media, it's now a really dead place.

B. starts a new job today at another law firm. First days can be interesting because of all the new personalities you encounter.

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Talk about the "Algorithm Jockey" becoming a real thing—Google is now that AJ returns results with incorrect and potentially dangerous information, like people should eat one rock per day. The web is not only stupid and wacky, it can kill you. I suspect there is a part of the human condition that lusts for relishing in the suffering of others, and the internet and AI is the perfect cocktail made by an AI bartender bot, hiding behind Section 230. Talk about a juggernaut. This is a perfect example of one.

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It's not that things are always changing—it's that they're always being re-defined. So something may not appear to have changed, but has been re-defined without it necessarily changing its form or function.

5/28/2025

5/28/2005: "Sat down at the piano and improvised the most stunningly beautiful piece.(You wonder why people need religion when you have these kinds of experiences—creating straight from the ether...)"

[I wish I had saved this, or perhaps it was used in something else. It's difficult to "bottle" these kinds of moments, with "bottling" meaning capturing its essence a second time. Even if you managed to have a recording of it, recreating it, or notating it is always a second-generation. The right hemisphere is dominant while impro-

vising and the bottling is a function of the left. Several days ago I attempted to play an improvised piano piece as orthopedic surgeon Anthony Cicoria had after having been struck by lightning, and I can see his process–reacting to each moment as it arises, following where it leads without thinking. If you did this for 5 minutes you could have some riffs you could use. This was the idea on *Rifts*, where I freely improvised in the Lydian mode, then later went back and used the riffs on something else.].

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Read article about "authenticity" (that word again) in law firms, saying that new associates want structure. In my experience, structure is anathema to the idea of personal authenticity. Authenticity ultimately means you can authentically get back on a bucking bronco because you know it's the challenge for you and it's in your bones. "Authenticity" then means it's blood and marrow. Artists ultimately don't survive in rigid corporate environments. If you have a constellation of artists archetypes and are in that environment now, and others in the future that you think are going to work, get out!! A forced or learned inauthenticity I believe can bring on chronic illness. I was continually going to doctors when I worked at law firms. But the challenge is to navigate through your own ideas of what authenticity is. Usually it's being authentically joined with the group mind. I don't think it's possible to even have an art hobby once your soul has made the swap. You'd never have the motivation to do something with zero passion. What happens when you change your personality is that you disrupt the "stacking". The happiest people are the people who linearly stacked their lives like tree rings, and the tree grows uniformly. But then there are the trees that are constantly hacked so as to not interfere with power lines and they look barely alive.

Words can have different uses as time goes on. The most common example is the word "creativity" which has evolved over the decades. But a new word that we've been using for the past 20 years or so is the word "authenticity". In the 20th century, the word had to do with its opposite meaning: something fake, counterfeit, a copy of something, a forgery. This makes sense when we use it as a corollary with our individualistic lives, as opposed to the earlier or mid 20th century when we would have used the traditional definition of the word. But after the 1960s we thought more about ourselves being authentic as opposed to a fake or imposter. Many of us feel like fakes because we have to assume certain roles in society that are in conflict with the way we see our authentic selves. An authentic man in the 19th century probably would have been a man who had a certain standing in society, say, perhaps a politician, or a business owner, or a member of the clergy, who lived an authentic, mature lifestyle. In the 21st century, the authentic man is the self-made man, the entrepreneur, the billionaire, who can fashion his life however he wants, and people will respect him for it, even though he is immature in comparison to the 19th century authentic man.

May 29ths

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Over the past decade or so I have been hearing more discussion of the Self and Self-actualization. If you use the analogy of an artificially intelligent being that's been developed over decades, we'd assume that it would eventually develop an "ego". But that ego would always have to be "plugged in". What the spiritualists seem to be saying is that the real Self doesn't have to be physically plugged in: It's the one that runs on the grid-less "renewable energy" in the Universe. The one we identify with is the one that always has to be plugged into the grid. But in reality, both need to be on and "collaborating" at the same time.

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Continuing on with the book *Sincerity*. This is the ending paragraph. I think It's fairly accurate and is a good way to close the book: "For an individual person to have integrity and moral character to exist as a being without wax [sic], to feel that his or her inner life is a familiar and comfortable place, it is absolutely necessary." If you're going to do work in any area, you have to put all the other cultural stuff aside for a while, and you have to get down to making things and not always thinking about how it's going to be perceived or what our motivations are, or just playing games with yourself. Just do the work and finish something, and then step back from it and ask, "Is this something that I want to continue doing?", "Do I enjoy doing it?" If you enjoy doing it then that's the answer; You should continue to do it. You shouldn't second-guess it because everybody plays that culture game: "Should I do this or not do this?" And so you're always philosophizing before you actually do something,

and it can kill motivation because you eventually won't do anything. But that's actually a cunning way of approaching it. That's what Marcel Duchamp did: he made art up to a certain point, then started making the readymades, then he just dropped art altogether and just played chess. He saw no need to make any more objects, and I'm kind of like that as well in art, and why I've gone back to music, because it gives me a sense of inner satisfaction. It's sincere to me. I'm now less concerned about appearing not to do something, or doing something just for cultural approval–the constant cultural analysis and constant analyzing of our intentions. You can't make any art that you like yourself. That's the important thing. Make it so that you like it, and you can continue to make art that you like and ultimately it makes your life more meaningful.

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Podcasts have been around for almost 15 years now. I started listening to them very early on when they first came out and was fascinated with them. It's just radio, but there's all this promotion that has to be done for a podcast and it seems funny to me that we would have had to advertise radio. Radios have advertisements; we don't have to advertise radio as a medium. Now we're always advertising our media.

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I hadn't checked in with the news this morning on the developments in the Uvalde shooting but the thought I had was that social media is implicated. There's an emotional element that's coming through our devices and into the internet and on social media. They're intimately connected now and we can't separate them, as we also have an inability to do anything about gun control or the inability to do anything about social media, which feed off of each other. So we have

two huge problems: If we solve the social media problem it may solve some of the violence that's going on now. 20 years ago at Columbine we didn't yet have social media but we had the internet—and new technology for the spread of mind viruses.

A possible solution to the social media dilemma is to use some kind of a metaphor. The old newspaper model is a good one—for someone as old as me. If you want to voice your opinion you have to write a letter to the editor, and either it's accepted or it's rejected and it's not an infringement of first amendment rights.

Also everybody's saying the same thing: I had a conversation with someone last night and I was thinking "Uvalde is going to come up in the conversation.", and it was everything I already heard on the news. None of us are experts so we just continue on with the preacher-choir thing.

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Life happens in layers: When you get to be in your 50s and 60s and you've been doing things for a long time, they become stratified layers—as one would see on a mountainside.

I've been playing music since the late 1970s and studied music in the 1980s. Throughout the 90s I was writing a different kind of music so it was a different layer. But I still had access to the other layers; It wasn't that I was shutting them off.

In 2001 I got my first digital camera. Every year I'd create a new folder—a new "layer" and accordingly have a "layer" for every year. I'm constantly going back through the layers and "mine" it for useful content. It has become generative.

Once you start accumulating content in layers, you can always access those layers. They can get compressed or buried over time, or get squirreled away into closets and basements, but I like to have some kind of organizational system that I can apply. This way I can always grab an idea from years ago and start doing something with it if I don't have any other more recent ideas.

Back in the 1980s, I began to carry an index card in my top pocket that I called my "nerd card". A friend of mine was doing it and I thought it was a good way to keep a to-do list. Now we know it as a smartphone. In fact, I had ideas about an electronic nerd card back then.

In the 1990s there was a program called "InfoSelect" (It sill exists!) which was essentially a flat-file database that one used as their go-to software, as we now use note-keeping software. (In fact, I am writing this in Evernote). It is that nerd card scaled exponentially.

[5/29/2025: The current layer are the Songdays, taking words of phrases from the diaries and making songs out of them].[8]

On *Frontiers*, literally and figuratively:

It's interesting how things can gather meaning over time, sometimes over hundreds of years or perhaps even a few days or weeks.

A few weeks ago I released my *Frontiers* album. The original title was *Central Coast* but I didn't use it because it would have been too confusing with the central coast of California. A few days ago I was listening to an interview with the poet

8. https://barrystudio.blogspot.com/2025/05/songdays.html

David Whyte who was on the On Being podcast talking about frontiers (metaphorically) and I realized that typically when I work on a piece of music or a piece of art it takes a while for me to understand what it's telling me to make, as opposed to me orchestrating the entire exercise. It started as a collection drawing from about 40 possibilities--songs partially written and/or recorded, which could be conceptualized as my "Chicago"album, as a kind of "Third Coast" of what was once a "Second City". But as the project evolved it gathered other meaning by the things happening in the world and in my life, sometimes changing the meaning of individual songs written perhaps over ten years ago. The interview with David Whyte was interesting because he was talking about Frontiers, this in particular:[9]

"It's astonishing how much time human beings spend away from that frontier, abstracting themselves out of their bodies, out of their direct experience, and out of a deeper, broader, and wider possible future that's waiting for them if they hold the conversation at that frontier level. Half of what's about to occur is unknown, both inside you and outside you."

So the music is that conversation that I held at the frontier level in retrospect--that's what it's about. There might be other things in the future that I'll encounter that will make the album more meaningful to me and perhaps to somebody else. Maybe they learn something more about the songs or that perhaps a title resonates with them (such as "Sign From God"). There might be something that is happening to them in their life so there's a connection made, even in my life when there's a "sign from God" as I'm building my life, both of which weren't a fact when I initially wrote those particular songs.

9. https://onbeing.org/programs/david-whyte-seeking-language-large-enough/

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There are many connections that get made over time and even with the artists themselves. They might look at something they did 10 years ago and it might have gathered a different meaning--and either you're going to change it or you're not going to change it, but this different meaning that it collected changes you in some way. You can say, "I'll never do that again", or "I can redo that", and make it mean something else. So meaning is never fixed--at least for me with the visual art. I can look at something that I did and say I won't do that again, meaning I'm done with that series. But there's something in there that I can take that's gathered a different meaning and make something else out of that. Meaning is a collective process, not only with artists, but the people who view the artist's work, and it can be transformative in a lot of ways. The meaning of frontiers and boundaries has a sense of creating a place. A place can be created by the boundaries that you create around it, so in a sense, this album is Music For Places, music for Chicago, but not really. It's psychogeographic. I really love that term because it's the feeling you get from a place, it's the sound that a place makes which can be abstracted from that place. It's not the sounds from that place, it's not blues. Blues is in my album but it's not a blues record, but that one element kind of describes it and gives its meaning, so it's a "frontier". The frontier of Chicago might be the frontier of the west--obviously it is literally the frontier of the west. So how does that sound? How does the heartland of America be the frontier to western America, or the east coast or Canada? Where are the boundaries of our psychogeography

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In the early 20th century, Memorial Day commemorations themselves largely serve as occasions for a generalized, watered-down patriotism from which the Civil War and the reasons it was fought are increasingly excluded, in favor of honoring the dead of all US wars, but also as the location for a three-day holiday weekend during which both the most important American automobile race, the Indianapolis 500, and an important golf championship, the memorial, are held.

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In Turkey, Erdogan wins election in narrow victory, with the same slim margins in the US since 2000, when power-grabbing in the West started to become a thing. Before, despots probably thought coups were over, in Western democracies, but they realized they were still possible: "We will be together until the grave". Ruth Ben-Ghiat: "This is called electoral autocracy...The principle behind it is simple. The more incompetent and destructive you are as a leader, the more censorship, disinformation, repression, and electoral tricks you require to stay in office. This formula helped Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán be re-elected last spring."

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I've been interested in archetypes since I was a Jung enthusiast in the late 1980s, as well as works by Joseph Campbell, Robert Bly, and other authors who were part of the men's movement. It's interesting that it's now evolved into what I call ''neo-Jungianism", with people such as Jordan Peterson and even Russell Brand. I thought Jordan Peterson was interesting in the beginning because he comes from those 80s roots, but it's metastasized into something else now, driven by everyone's addiction to celebrity status. The internet does

crazy things to people—especially social media. Once people become popular then they have to play the game. Personally, I hate the status games. What I've been more interested in are archetypes. But I think social media is changing those as well, even without our being aware of them. The primary one is the Prostitute—whoring for attention on the "first floor". Google also probably picks up on our archetypes because those are the things that people might be interested in about us. They're looking for certain things that square with what they think your archetype is. People are searching for things that fit their perception of who you are, when in fact archetypes aren't always visible in the same way to everyone, so you could say they are potential archetypes.

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5/29/2024

I'm starting to like the idea that *Sum II* will now be titled "Gathering Stones", and now I'm gathering images. This one feels nice—the sticks are the tools to gather the stones, or are a form of measuring, or are a symbol of 4, as in 4/4. A stone bowl can also be a gathering stone.

I can't imagine that AI has anything to do with this process, but I'm sure there are millions of young musicists where it's everything and their entire existence depends on being the new AI star. They're not thinking about the creative process, but it has to factor in at some point. I don't want AI (Ava) as my producer. However, AI could be useful in locating imagery to go with the "look" of the album. As I browsed and searched "Gathering Sticks" I noticed that most of the images related to the biblical meanings and metaphors. It's not what I want, but it's interesting as a metaphor. Sometimes metaphors allow us to entertain ideas we wouldn't normally entertain, or would dismiss out of hand. It's a way of getting

closer to things, and perhaps weaving them into the creative process, keeping them figurative, not literal.

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Is creativity "spiritual"? There are "spiritual" aspects sometimes—defined by those things that defy explanation—where you can't explain to someone else how you did it. Otherwise, creativity is almost all productivity, alternating between the divergent and the convergent. Gathering stones collected at a beach and scattered on the floor of the studio is divergent. Connecting and organizing the stones is convergent. They could go into lots of different categories, and that's part of the process as well. But the one that gets finished is the one that is creative writ large. I can imagine different ways of connecting them, but I still need to physically organize them and bring them to some kind of resolution for it to be Creative. I don't feel spirituality is involved other than working. The overall concept can have spiritual aspects in terms of being mindful of the outcome, and keeping steady on the path—or finding one that weaves throughout the work for the sake of integrity.

5/29/2025

The world has always been about adaptations, and the 21st century is no exception, especially with artificial intelligence. I often lament the fact that people don't do things manually any longer, including playing instruments or writing in notation. AI is now the technological inflection point where an organism begins to gradually change. If the sun dimmed 20% over a year, there would be no adaptation–there would be a die-off on the planet. But if it was over several hundred years there would be adaptation everywhere. Technology would have to change as well. So what we we're doing with AI in 2025 would be different from 2325, and would have

been used primarily for growing food, not generating art to share on social media.

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Interesting: "To the grave" thinking: I will do, be, have to do _____ until the grave. This has to do with the low misery set-points of humans. Commiseration is a way for humans to connect: "You're miserable, I'm miserable, we're all in the same big boat..." Humans have a rigidity like no other organism--they get into ruts.

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What is the ratio of profound thoughts and cliches? You might have had what seems to be a brilliant thought but someone else had already thought of it. Perhaps it's a good thing for profound insights to be cliches because they become embedded in collective thought and are tacitly implied and become high context. But even then, what we knew as the rule of law as high context has become low context--where a convicted felon can become president of the United States, and operates on the cliche, "an eye for an eye", yet twists it to his advantage. Human universals are in a sense cliches because they are something everyone collectively knows as a high-context rule. But the postmodern world allows us to operate as if anything goes, a low-context rule.

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Interesting: "Mike Smith" the streaming AI music fraudster. You wonder if it's a fake name or fake everything. Music is all about gaming now, "casino creativity".

"Smith was a former medical clinic owner from North Carolina. He got into the music business in the 2010s, invest-

ing big money into a label called SMH Records. He funded reality shows, produced a track with Snoop Dogg, and appeared on BET's One Shot as a judge alongside DJ Khaled and T.I. To the industry, he looked legitimate. Behind the scenes, it was a different story."

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When you're multitasking something is always going to fall away–it has to. Take multi-instrumentalist/songwriters for example. When you're focused on making the song work, You're not focused in so much on the performances, even though that's also very important, but when everything is important, priorities are going to change. If you had the idea, and you were the person who started to build the song from a seed, you're not going to sit around for hours and play around with guitar sounds, drum sounds and so on, including shopping around online, watching videos, etc.. That's something that producers and engineers do. But if you're also the producer, sometimes you have to change the priorities. I've always put the priorities on the writing, because I am a writer. An effects guitarist puts their priorities elsewhere. When I was composing ambient music, I sat for hours fiddling around the sounds, which was interesting at the time, but somehow I'm very bored by it now. I want to be hands-on with the writing, I want to be hands-on in the score. Working is a form of "championing" ideas (and ideals)--what you really value any one time. But that changes over time as well. If atmosphere excites me I probably would put scoring on the back-burner, but scores can be a good framework for the whole piece. Buildings that start with that tend to stand up better than buildings that are held up by decorations (atmosphere).

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Like a grocery store or a hardware store, social media is the "validation store". When you run out of confidence you have to take a trip to the validation store.

May 30ths

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Even if you don't have the fundamentals you can have a foundation. Take for example people who never studied music or they never studied art: They also have a foundation if it's something they've been doing for a long time.

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Everywhere you look now on social media, we're being told how to be and what to do and what to value or not value. The number of inspirational/spiritual/self-help books written since the 1960s must be in the tens of thousands by now, and the internet amps that up exponentially. But there are some books that put them into perspective for me.

Recently, I read *The WEIRDest People in the World: How the West Became Psychologically Peculiar and Particularly Prosperous*. (WEIRD is an acronym for Western Educated Industrialized Rich and Democratic). It made me revisit my "higher consciousness" interests as a young adult in a post-Reagan society. When boomers were first entering the workforce, there was just as much self-empowerment information floating around. There just wasn't a way to make it viral, even though *Dianetics* was one of the first books I read to be empowered, and had a viral, cult-ish quality.

Ever since the notion of a self-help book someone has been telling us what we should do. This has gotten worse over the past decade, simply because of the firehose of content. Lately, I have been subscribing to Substack newsletters and my email inbox is always telling me the things I should do.

Because it is now "viral", there's just too much viral load in self-help information. We live in a help-yourself world now perhaps because of the decline of religions. As people became WEIRD they gave up on trying to suss what religious traditions had to do with individualistic pursuits. But strangely, people still banded together by being fans of things, like bands and going to rock concerts. I had a direct experience with cognitive dissonance caused by being a musician and being on a spiritual path—which I left to resolve the cognitive dissonance. People aren't interested in religions because of cryptic scripture: what does it have to do with day-to-day life, and what are the universal spiritual truths? Very often musicians will gravitate towards Buddhism because it has an access point to those truths, which gives them the spiritual part without the religious part, also known as SBNR (Spiritual But Not Religious), funnily, a strange bedfellow of WEIRD. Perhaps people feel like imposters if they aren't being a WEIRD person.

Your Family Wasn't WEIRD Originally

The reason we sometimes feel like an imposter (as pop culture may be telling us) may be the result of our family, and perhaps deep tribal history. We are now all WEIRD to some degree simply by virtue of the fact that we are all occupying both a shared reality and our own individual realities—what Caroline Myss calls the "innernet", now joined at the hip with the internet. But after reading Heinrich, that innernet also includes your deep history. But the post-agrarian world engenders a whole new idea of what a person can do with their life. Before modernity your station in life was predetermined by gender-based roles: Men would hunt and catch fish and women would cook and clean, which still prevails in some ways today by way of subconscious anthropological and psychological archetypes, regardless of technological

advancement (what we can call "WIRED"), which we presume would have replaced the old wiring.

What happened with WEIRD societies is that people got the idea that they had lots of other options available, particularly after universities emerged in the 11th or 12th century, as well as Enlightenment Europe generally. That's when things started to change and people developed a more intellectual inner life. Perhaps this can explain why we feel that we're imposters because there could be something in our DNA that determines what we're supposed to be doing in our life based on family traditions and perhaps epigenetic factors.

My grandparents were agrarians (as is the case with most of us if you consider deep history) and that could have some archetypal top-down force attempting to influence behaviors and choices. Perhaps I should be working more with my hands. So it's not surprising that I find myself wanting to play and write music manually, even though I've been essentially an electronic musician. The whole "rewilding" idea perhaps comes from this and is why we keep returning to it as a way to re-wild to the "default mode network" of culture. It's a comforting idea (remember the "slow" movement?), but the reality is that we have to be of many minds these days in order to navigate through the possible options we have available to us.

A common theme, especially in New Age (or "higher consciousness") circles, is that the Universe dictates what we should be doing with our lives—that we're born from a "seed" encoded with instructions to be strictly followed, that we should follow our Dharma, our innate talents. And it's up to us to try to figure out what that is—in stark contrast to the way it used to be before the WEIRD era.

A recent Marianne Williamson Tweet on "radical realignments":

"Our society has reached a fork in the road. In one direction lies the accumulated karma for all the greedy, irresponsible ways we have conducted ourselves collectively for a very long time—a path of increasingly severe and accelerated decline... The other direction is where we make a different choice: to recognize and atone for the chronic forms of abuse we have heaped upon ourselves and each other and the earth, radically realigning ourselves individually and collectively with the ways of devotion, reverence, peace and love."

As I recall, the so-called "cubicle" job started in the mid-1980s, interestingly at the beginning of the Millennial generation and the Reagan/neoliberalist era. This is when things started to go off the rails because it was in direct conflict with both the idea of a divine influence and a defined profession and made us too focused around the "ladder" metaphor and gaming it to ascend it faster—as an individual.

Given our deep history, and perhaps prescribed professions, most of us should not be necessarily working in office environments—if it is in fact true that our predetermined occupation comes from our family heritage and/or the way the universe defines it for us, or the way the society dictates. I'd think it's probably a combination of those three things.

If we do live in this WEIRD society now, how do we evolve using the various aspects of ourselves which come from our family lineage—the idea that there is a prescribed occupation that the Universe imbues in us, and now what the attention economy dictates what we should be doing. Take for example social media marketing, which most creative people have to do now. It's another form of "shadow work" which I think is moving us even farther away from the things that

should really be done based on core talents as they would have been defined originally. We're becoming (or already have become) this new society where the society dictates the things that we should be doing, even if it conflicts with both our heritage and our natural talents. It could be that society "knows" what our station is and we're supposed to follow that kind of thing either from our families or from what the particular economic climate is within the area that we live. For example, If you live in a city then you probably will have some office job requiring the square peg to fit into the round hole. It's what I see as the upshot of the 80s paradigm shift, which demoted natural talents and proclivities embedded in hundreds or thousands of years of family and tribal histories. If that is true, most of us have probably been doing the wrong thing our entire lives, as had our parents and grandparents when they became WEIRD.

What you want to do is revisit your family history and attempt to figure out what kinds of things your ancestors did going back as far as you can and then find something in the modern environment that matches with that. My father was an ironworker. It would make sense that I would gravitate to arts and crafts because even though an ironworker is not really an artist per se, my father did engage in some kind of craft, which came in the form of ornamental ironwork. So there's the universal definition of what a talent is, i.e. to make, to be creative and then extrapolate that accordingly.

To continue on with the family history, what one can do if you can't be a farmer like your grandfather, is to find out where the overlap is in the skills that a farmer would use and what artist would use, or at the level of the tools. How is the musical instrument like a farm implement? I know it sounds extreme but there has to be some overlap somewhere.

Evidence that we really have evolved can be seen in people that are doing things that are in the creative profession and being very successful at it, and then looking at what their parents did. For example, David Bowie's father was some kind of a charity worker and his mother was a housewife. Brian Eno's father was a postman, Sting's father was a milkman—common professions in the 1930s and 1940s. So what happened there? It's because they were WEIRD people.

Then there's the idea of the so-called "walk-in", an ethereal being that can walk into your life and take over your real personality. It's certainly an aspect to take into consideration if you're within that mindset. (I'm not) For example, for an Italian person, the professions that they could possibly go into could involve some art profession because that is the epicenter of the Renaissance. Am I a Renaissance Man because of my Italian heritage? Perhaps.

Many of our occupations also come from the world conditions at the time that we entered the workforce. Would my father, who eventually became an ironworker, have become an ironworker if he wasn't in the Army? World wars (and pandemics for that matter) are inflection points and can have a big influence on the things that young people do in their lives.

The business name "___ & Sons" (For example, Joseph Smith & Sons) is a good indication that the sons followed in the father's footsteps and it would be interesting to study those kinds of people to see if, in fact, they fulfilled their life stories on the different levels that we have now. Would it have fulfilled their lives on the spiritual level vis-a-vis the idea that what we're supposed to be doing in life is defined from the beginning of the universe and then at the level of the family or tribe, then applying that to 2021? So now

instead of Joseph Smith & Sons we have people that are perhaps working in IT—now definitely a WEIRD thing.

Jill Purce, the wife of Rupert Sheldrake (known for his morphic resonance theory), is a family constellation therapist. In her work with families she found interesting contrasts with less individualistic traditions:

"I became very interested in much more detailed effects of very specific ancestors and asking people why they did what they did—people who found a career and this or that you know why and how that related to specific things that ancestors had done....The children find suddenly out of the blue they find that they're going along one way and suddenly their life path changes...I began to realize this inheritance of energetic streams of thoughts of intentions of events unfulfilled events think interruptions which caused trauma in the field all kinds of things were being transmitted down the lines affecting us. What we do in life and how we feel in life our emotional development is all related to what members of our families have done before."

The gradual evolution into the neoliberalist model is perhaps eroding our natural proclivities and might create problems throughout not only our lives but the lives of our offspring—if, in fact, we fully take into consideration Heinrich's truly WEIRD evolutionary biology background.

I certainly went off on my own because I realized later on in my life that I don't share any interests with anyone on either side of the family. So I wonder if there are some younger generations that think like I do and take the same path. It seems most have taken the WEIRD paths which are now by definition all individualistic paths.

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5/30/2022

If it is in fact true that trauma ripples through the generations, Memorial Day is a day to reflect on how that's continuing to play out.

Humans are perhaps wired to be miserable, which may serve some evolutionary purpose to keep us striving for more. Everyone has their own low set-point similarity to a weight set-point, where some people can be extremely overweight because their set-point is high. People with a low mood set-point tend to be more pessimistic regardless of their situation.

5/30/2023

Communication styles are now "quippy". Long threads on conversation are long gone. It's now about sharing your stuff regardless about what someone asked about earlier. No one seems to want to answer your direct questions.

New wrinkle (at least to me): "He/him/his". I think they should allow people to put whatever they want on their name badge, as they would on a social media profile. Me: Metamodernist

Quora: Is postmodern art on the decline? I see it both flourishing and declining, which might mean that we view it as a both-and situation where artists have a wider range of philosophical positions. In music, I tend to alternate between pre-modern (classical, folk, ethnic) and postmodern (pop, electronic, ambient, experimental) and see them as being equally viable creatively. In visual art, I am completely postmodern, and as far as I'm concerned, isn't declining because it is such fertile ground for conceptual work. Since I don't make representational art, I can't be pre-modern, which has

to do with whether you have the manual skills. However, postmodernism may end should democratic systems erode. There seems to be more and more interest in so-called metamodernism which will succeed postmodernism and will be more free and eclectic. It won't be that artists will feel they need to have an allegiance to postmodernism, which is just as limiting as modernism or pre-modernism.

[5/30/2024: AI art seems to continue to follow this evolution, with the content being more representational or modernist, compared to the late 90s, when postmodernism was hot in popular culture. It still is, but content creators tend to want to follow current trends of creating work that is less unnerving, as compared to the 90s when people seemed to want anxiety-provoking content. I recall David Bowie saying in an interview in 1999 that he felt an urgency to create postmodern work because that era was perhaps ending. It's interesting that Bowie's artwork was mostly representational (modernist) when almost all the music was postmodernist. He did things that were blues-based, which was modernist.].

5/30/2024

As I make tweaks to the original diary entries, I get to revisit things, to wit, the modernist/postmodernist topic. What's now happening with AI art is a "free ride" in modernism—the fact that people can generate portraits and landscapes without any skill, which is a postmodernist idea, all the while thinking this could be a new age of metamodernism. I think there are too many gray areas, which is something that modern society has liked for the past 25 years, beginning with Bush 43. Now there seems to be (even more) contempt for postmodernism, yet generating creepy portraits and other surrealist imagery gives people the feeling that they're artists with real skills. Art that is fast and easy, or just done by

phoning it in, is the first clue of postmodern work. Lots of that stuff was really interesting "work". Considerations such as this can become paralyzing when creating work, especially in music, when you have to get in the trenches of production, and you're faced with having to take philosophical positions based on what you're able to do in production. If you want to do something traditional or modernist that requires lots of acoustic instruments, and you don't have them, you have to resort to electronics, which may not accurately represent the content. Representational work has to be properly represented or else it could be too postmodernist.

5/30/2025

How can we stop letting life imitate art and just make the art? One has to wonder if our current fascination with AI, and technology in general arises from the films and documentaries we've made over the last century. This is why music is an interesting diversion: it doesn't suggest anything about what the future should be. It can be futuristic, but it isn't telling us how the future should be. Phil Glass's score doesn't. It's interesting and ironic to contrast it with 1886, when electricity was just starting to replace gaslighting--and perhaps suggest a film about gaslighting.

Dynaxiom: When you're older, experimenting with new ways of working means less than experimenting the way you always have. Both are experiments with the same result: making something that you excites you and that you find interesting. The difference is the fact the new tools were given to you rather than your finding or making new tools or processes.

Just as I was writing this I stumbled on the 5/30/1998 entry: "When shopping for a pair of casual slacks I got pressured into buying a whole ensemble of dress clothes. I felt so vic-

timized as two salespersons insisted on making my choices for me. (The artist in me really balked at that idea)."

It's important for artists to balk at things. It doesn't mean you're ossified--it means you've stood your artist ground. At the same time it's important for artists to experiment with new technologies while being wary of them stealing their real intentions or authenticity.]

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Idea generation is fine, but you have to stop and do the work. Art is in fact a chore if you've been doing it a long time. But we don't like working which is why AI is so interesting to people: it gives them a hobby that doesn't require working, and is commingled with things like watching movies. We like things to be created at the same time scale, i.e making a film in 90 minutes (or seconds) and releasing it on social media. Do we have the capacity to spend 90 con*t*iguous hours (or days) on something as we did before the internet?

NYT article on benefits of walking and the "soundwalk", here referencing a soundmark, the cornerstone of Music For Place: ""If my neighborhood had an official sound, it would be the sound of the St. Claude Avenue Bridge," he said. "There's a honking sound when the drawbridge is about to go up or down." Idea: "Walkable Photos" (Random photos taken on a walk).

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Men are funny. It's easy to "one-down" them because they're so focused on winning. If they see other men appearing to win, they feel they've lost. They were "one-downed" and makes them a downer. It probably has to do with testoster-

one and serotonin. For women it's oxytocin and serotonin because they don't have T.

May 31sts

5/31/2023

One of those Mays that is more like June or July, as opposed to March or April.

[5/31/2025: The reverse in 2025: May is like March or April. Could be the result of global warming. CO2 currently 430 ppm up from 426 last year].

Idea: Go outside and take photos of 2023. It would be very difficult. Of course, cars eventually date photographs.

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ChatGPT query: Write a letter to the girlfriend of a 21-year-old woman who had recently left Chicago for California. The date is Monday May 31, 1886.

As we know, the key to good AI is asking good questions, but even if you do, the generated text is typically trite, cliche, and unusable. You might as well write it from scratch. The character I have in mind grew up in Chicago and left for California. The character was suggested by another ChatGPT'd character living in Chicago in 1886, who was an activist and who attended labor protests, but apparently, the dreamy California character is more drunk on the scenery. If you don't give it context it won't know it because in its current state, it has the memory of a goldfish. Also, I didn't necessarily want them to be a lesbian couple. It's interesting how "girlfriend" is interpreted. I don't want to use "friend" because I want them to be females. Also, what 21-year-old girl writes like this? You'd expect some fustian in 1886 but this is almost creepy. And weren't they at the Haymarket

Riots just 3 weeks ago? And isn't it Memorial Day? No mention of those things. You'd think they would be at the top of the data set.

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A few weeks ago I started having problems with my laptop keyboard in which certain keys would stick or repeat, like ggg and hhh, as well as the space bar not working. Essentially what I'm typing is entencesthathavenospacesinthem, or the technical term scriptio continua, a style of writing used back in the Middle Ages. What I thought was particularly interesting is that people have had this keyboard issue going back to 2012, so there must be seas of typos from which GPT is running on. No one's proofreading the internet. (This is actually something interesting for AI to do, but then there would be AI Wars, if they've not already started). Typos can be very Insidious. This goes back to my idea of bad inputs and outputs. Even if you think your inputs are optimal (race, class) trickle-down economics is going to hit you at some point. Thanks again Ronny.

5/31/2024

How to not return to "traps" in life?

NYT on hush money conviction lede: "What a time to be alive". Yes, very true. But the same could be said about anything about pop culture, including scary things like this. I think people are just bored to death and need to be shaken up by something. Also, America would eventually produce this predicament considering its 20th century history.

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How is it that society entertains the idea that words are somehow platform-specific—that words typed on Medium or Blogger are somehow different? I'm waiting to see how the fediverse pans out. To me, it's just a retro re-hash of the early web. If you want to be on the web, get your own domain and park things there. I think what is central is the idea of "sharing", a word perhaps that came from networking jargon, to "share" a drive—to make it public to certain people. The difference perhaps for the mid-20s is that sharing won't be public across the web so it can be indexed and scraped, but rather the "webmaster" (there's an ancient word) decides what is shared. In terms of content escaping the content "zoo", your custom LLM of your site would all be copyrighted and tagged such that scraped text would be watermarked, perhaps at the level of fonts or glyphs. My current concern is the integrity of the web, just as it was in 1998. But back then our lives didn't depend on it. P2P will come back.

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Cicadas swarming the tree outside my window. The decibel level has increased significantly. I would imagine this is not good for your high frequency sensitivity. Took a short soundwalk to record them. There are two "notes" that you hear and you can see them in the frequency analysis. There is one lower note between 1 and 2.5K and one more shrill between 3 and 6K. If you are subjected to this for hours it must have an impact on that frequency band. As you can see it goes up to 20K in the "mosquito" range and younger ears can probably hear that. It must be painful. [10]

Studio: Guitars on *Gathering Stones*. I think where this wants to go is a sound that is more earthy, a nice contrast to the space theme of *Nostalgia*.

10. https://youtu.be/HKJ3A9Whn4U

5/31/2025

5/31/1997: "Terrific documentary on the shooting of Apocalypse Now. At the end of the documentary he said that do-it-yourself video brings the art back into the creative process."

[What I've noticed about YouTube since its inception is that the content is no longer about art and aesthetics as it was in the beginning. YouTube is largely churned by algorithms, and content producers are "co-conspirators" with them. I started my channel in 2006 and people were uploading more artsy stuff and it was interesting. It was more of a Web 1.0 experience, with digital artists making art videos as an extension of what they might have been doing with Flash. I noticed this when I joined the Fediverse version of YouTube and it seemed like I was back in 2006 with people sharing that kind of material. Everything now is about Likes and Subscribers so as to feed algorithms. Personally, I try to remain true to what interests me. That's the First Commandment of creativity. All the creativity gurus say this. The re-make of *Apocalypse Now* was even more aesthetic, focusing on the artistry of the cinematographer Vittorio Storaro and editing by Walter Murch. Camille Paglia once said that film is the highest art form, and that's actually true. It will be interesting to see where filmmakers go. Will it be for Likes or for the sake of the art?]

5/31/1999: "The idea that chasing people out of a country and even killing them is an idea that has withstood the test of time, but isn't using people as a resource to build a nation a much better idea? Why is the human brain so prone to old ideas?"

[It was unfathomable in 1999 that the US would become a dictatorship, but the oldest of ideas never completely went away. You never know how low humans can go. The world might always be a place of collective misery with breaks here and there (the "First Turnings" in privileged places).]

Have we become a cargo cult for AI? One day the plane won't arrive, or there will be a coup and today won't be like yesterday.